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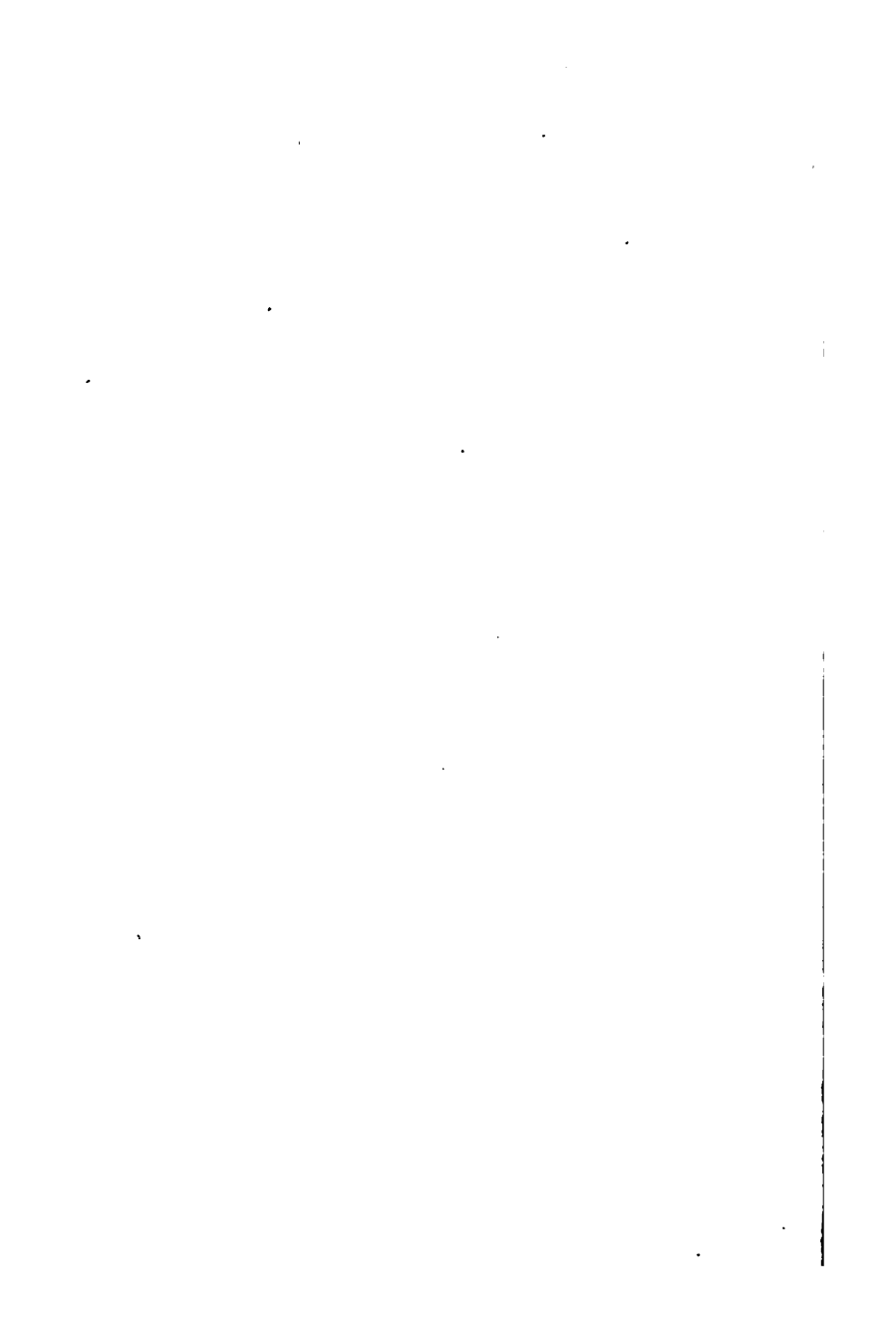
Frances Lord

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NORA.



N O R A.

A PLAY.

BY

HENRY IBSEN.

TRANSLATED FROM THE NORWEGIAN

BY

HENRIETTA FRANCES LORD.

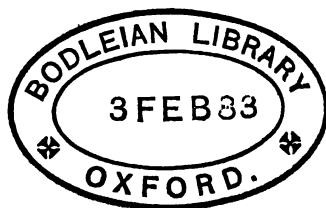


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LIFE OF HENRIK IBSEN.

HENRIK IBSEN was born in Norway, March 20, 1828, and lived there until 1864, when, in his distress that Sweden and Norway would not help Denmark to resist Prussia, he wrote scornful epigrams about his fellow-countrymen, and since then he has not been in Norway. He lived for some years in Dresden, since 1878 has been chiefly in Rome, but has no settled home.

Of his earlier works, *Catiline*, *Fru Inger*, *The Comedy of Love*, and above all, *Rivals for the Crown*, 1864, were those that chiefly brought him into notice, until in 1866 *Brand* gave him a fame that grew with *Peer Gynt*, *Youth's Bond*, *Emperor and Galilean* (translated by Miss C. Ray: S. Tinsley), *The Pillars of Society*; 1879 *Nora* appeared, and at Christmas 1881, *Ghosts*.

He has married a daughter of Mrs. Magdalene Thoresen, a Norwegian poetess. He has a small literary pension from the Norwegian Government, the rest of his income is derived from his writings.

His long grey hair and whiskers make him look somewhat more than fifty. He is short but firmly and well built, so that he looks taller than he is. The most characteristic points in his serious, decided face are his powerful forehead, which is remarkably broad and high, a very Jupiter's brow, and his delicate mouth; it has no lips, but shuts energetically in a fine line, and it expresses inexhaustible will, as though some giant resolve were for ever being taken afresh. His small blue eyes almost disappear behind his spectacles. His nose is quite Northern in its irregularity. He speaks softly, moves slowly, and rarely gesticulates. His self-command almost amounts to coldness; it is but the snow that covers a volcano of wild and passionate power.

The play now given us as *Nora* is called in Norwegian *Et Dukkehjem*. To a public unused to Ibsen's surprises, *A Doll's House* is a misleading title; the German translator seems to have felt this too, and preferred to call his translation of the play *Nora*.

Whatever is written in Swedish, Norwegian, or Danish can be read without a translator's help in Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Finland; and, as I learnt during my own residence in Stockholm, 1878-9, the cultivated homes among these ten millions of people look to Ibsen as their great teacher. They do not always like what he says, but they let him speak on. Such furious discussion did *Nora* rouse when the play came out, 1879-80, that many a social invitation given in Stockholm during that winter bore the words, "You are requested not to mention Ibsen's *Doll's House*!" The play's firm hold on the Scandinavian mind has been strengthened, rather than effaced, by his *Ghosts* (1881); and how firm this hold is a mass of criticism shows as it continues to pour from the press. In a series of essays called 'Questions of the Day' is *Ibsen and the Marriage Question*, by 'Robinson.' It explains Ibsen's position in the worlds of thought and literature, and in Scandinavian estimation so well, that I venture to give much of its substance.

Marriage is still an unsettled problem. The Eastern poets sing Woman a slave, the Western, Man enslaved by her. But far-sighted spirits like Dante reject both views, and sing Ideal Love, a thought too precious for humanity to let it escape when once it reached human consciousness. Yet it is philosophers and moralists whom Time leads to accept it, while the poets, its first leaders, ignore the truth that marriage involves human dignity, responsibility, community, and mutual trust. It is to making this truth clear that Henry Ibsen has devoted his poet's gift. No sooner does a great and popular poet do so, than we see how little woman's own voice has been heard in other poetry; and we feel thankful that a singer who can make himself gladly heard is singing of freedom, openness, true and conscious devotion, conscience responsible to itself alike in man and woman. Ibsen sees the world deluged by masculine qualities; he approves them if, by devotion to a distinct plan and its execution, they touch heroism, otherwise he chases lovers of self mercilessly about with scorn or laughter. He sees womanly qualities hidden, fled away, or misunderstood. He does not construct some purely harmonious circumstances, and show Woman attaining a seeming equilibrium, and becoming all that her nature is capable of. He either shows her driven to crime or eccentricity by cramped or misdirected development (as *Nora* was), or losing her womanliness by being reared in a wrong state of society (like Helen in *Emperor and Galilean*); or finally he opens all the great gates of his poetry to noble, pure-hearted, loving, disappointed women, who move about among reckless men as the natural centres for conversion and reconciliation, but either lack courage to seize the occasion, or, if they have much

courage, happen to have such a pig-headed, one-sided manhood to deal with, that the inspired woman, the heavenly herald of nature and conscience, is trampled under foot, or passed by, the man regretting it, but when it is too late.

Such are most of Ibsen's women. He considers they are to be found everywhere, a latent force whose accession humanity needs, and that his task is to release the Sleeping Beauty, as the prince did in our childish fable. The thorny wood has grown all round. Meanwhile, unwomanliness flaunts outside; the thorns are blooming. Men dream away life amid this injury to womanhood; at any rate they forget to break their way in to reality—they are ready for any deed rather than that. Ibsen approaches the thorn-girt home; he knows that every expression crushes thousands of conventionality's roses; and on his plain but trusty sword are these words only—Love and Understand. Expanded, the words mean—The union between two people is only true according as they love and understand each other in thought, feeling, and will, tasks of duty and sources of joy, and are consequently able to fight life's battles, bear its pains, and enjoy its glory together; and this by having directed, forwarded, and freed each other's development.

Renowned as Ibsen has long been, it was *Nora* (1879, during a few months' journey round Europe) that procured him the title 'Woman's Poet,' because it threw a lightning flash over all his past writing.

To see Ibsen's position as a dramatist we ought to glance at the history of the stage, and especially at the French stage, which has influenced all other dramatic writing for the past 150 years, and then we shall ask why Ibsen passes by and turns away from something by which Frenchmen produce their greatest stage effects. That class of women to whom novels and plays have been giving complete publicity year after year, and who are very conspicuous in the world, are almost excluded from the great Northman's works. While French dramatists and their disciples are never weary of depicting these beings, who have nothing of woman but her outward enchantment, whereby they rule Society's life, and are like a pest in its midst, Ibsen has worked out but one such figure, Helen in the *Emperor and Galilean*, and he chastises her as before him only the world's greatest poets for the stage have dared to chastise her like. Through Ibsen, as through Shakespeare, we get a striking impression that the one absolutely unpoetical thing in humanity is to be born to develop through struggle and change into a human being, and yet to will to have one's influence in life only as being a beautiful animal.

Other poets—modern Frenchmen and Swinburne even more than they—may show by the strongest language that they hold this same view, and how every such woman exists but as an

injury, a sort of scar on humanity's living organism ; but all their words only increase her power, and she knows this only too well.

Under our existing social conditions Silence is the only thing that can possibly lessen her death-bringing power ; that people should find a world-renowned poet, who knows how to touch all the fine chords of ideality, and at the same time is wide awake to all that goes on around him, simply sets her aside, wholly ignores her, or makes her a mere listener, puts her outside the real action of the poem, and in the same position as a listless and ignorant person occupies during brilliant conversation among intelligent people, so that the reader or the onlooker is obliged to ask himself how a being thus spiritually defective could ever have got a place amid the awakened life of human work and human will.

Thinking Frenchmen seem to wish to treat such women not as exceptions to womanhood, but as characteristic of it ; but whether the woman be cunning or simple, coquette or prude, she never arrives at any development through the action of the piece, and there is nothing to show whether she will end in being like her surroundings, or be educated by life into real womanhood. Ibsen, on the contrary, handles the question of development seriously, as being for woman the question of awakening in the end to being able to love devotedly and really.

It is not only as an idealist that Ibsen knows this is the highest thing ; he knows as a realist, as a friend to the modern philosophy of development or 'evolution,' that every return to an earlier or ruder view of life, when a more human one has already entered the general consciousness, is unnatural. With these two convictions he plans his work and carries it out ; he feels he is the messenger of nature and the spirit, and therefore, amid the moral anachronisms in the rest of European poetry, he bursts in like a storm from the North to clear the air. So far as he is concerned he will contribute nothing to justify antiquated habits of thought.

Ibsen considers that the womanly life that is available for dramatic purposes, all the conditions for passionate action among her virtues and sins, together with the events arising out of them, are different from what they were in past times, because the sort of influence it is now natural for her to strive after is different.

Woman of course exercises influence in all possible ways ; but if it be not that of a free and loving being, it drags down, it is an influence of somnambulism, death, and retrogression, a return to the Oriental idea of the relation between the sexes, according to which it is a merit for her to have no soul.

Against this now antiquated, animal view, whether on its respectable or its unrespectable side, Ibsen wages ceaseless war, and with a strategy that he has devised for himself. At any

rate he has turned his back on the French method which has been so industriously copied.

All women who willingly or unwillingly are part of the confederacy for maintaining the exclusive responsibility of man's qualities in the world, all women who thus consciously or unconsciously are foes to woman's development, and, if they try to have influence, try to have it in some other and therefore some unnatural way, Ibsen disposes of summarily: in Princess Helen and a few others. And he considers he has then got rid of the whole brood.

But the richest streams from the royal veins of his poetry flow towards the other women, who are natural, fresh, self-deceived; who desired development, but did not as a rule find circumstances ripe enough to give it them; who were thus cheated out of life; who were alone in their day, or even before their day. He considers that he has a good opportunity for doing this even when he is handling the great historic forces of the world, religious and other grave matters; his reason presumably being that he considers these great things can never be settled without one half of the human race.

It is, then, marriage in its widest sense, the common work of man and woman, which is the question of questions to the great poet; the question that involves the final untying of every knot of difficulty, or at least the question whether or no we are to realize the idea of our race.

Nothing is justifiable in man or woman that is one-sided. Ibsen's plays show what ruin the Furies of one-sidedness can work in the absence of harmonious understanding between man and woman. Ibsen views the relation between the sexes as the ultimate cause our reason can trace for all the unloveliness our race has inherited. This unloveliness may have more remote causes, and he suggests these infinite questions, but without believing he can get incontestable answers to them, as he believes he can about marriage.

A reader who from nature or teaching inclines to the Oriental view of the sexes, will find Ibsen's writings merely 'destructive' and 'negative.' Our examination will lead us, however, to see that his poetry is more constructive and positive than any other of his time; for to say that a wrong relation between the sexes is for us human beings the visible reason for all that is unlovely, is the same as saying that beauty, or the realizing the idea of our race, is much nearer to us, more natural, more possible, than we could otherwise dare to believe.

The contempt for women associated with Don Juan's name has given place to another story, also a mediæval one, that of Venus and Tannhäuser, where woman is the leader astray, and just now this is the only story that is applied in dramatic writing. Possibly some

poets fancy that they do woman honour thereby, so far as her sex may be said to exercise a sort of right of chastisement for centuries of hampered development. The poison does not consist in our awakening to the consciousness that we possess senses as well as souls. That consciousness is exactly what a poet should rouse and help to set in order; he is the only person really qualified to do it. The poison consists in getting our natural dislike at all lessened towards the Venus and Tannhäuser story, and the representation of our nature underlying it, whose meaning is a thousand times more lowering to all that woman means in this world than any told of Don Juan. For when that story had done its worst, it had but expressed the dishonour of some one woman. The Venus story disgraces the whole sex, and does it through a woman.

And the most refined, surest, most weakening poison of all consists in regarding such scenes as living pictures, where no historical consequences of action appear, or rather no consequences of any sort; but where the events are a joke, and the end a joke, and the whole a mere amusement, a cannibal feast, where the actresses are crowned with roses.

There is not a drop of this poison in Ibsen's poetry. This should not be forgotten in reckoning up the essentials whenever his title 'Woman's Poet' is in question, for there is no mistaking its meaning in an author powerful as he is; it cannot arise from any want of power to choose or manage material. It means neither more nor less than that Ibsen will not depict a woman using power when this power is based on hampered development; he considers that idea has had its day, and must now be consigned to the tomb, though in all his plays he allows for difference of historical period, and for individual strength or weakness.

Ibsen's women are generally beings with a power to accomplish an entire and distinct task in life, such women as, when life at any time offers them a share in action, put their mark on it, in the same way as women like them will when more sensible manners shall prevail in the world, and earth's face grow young once more with springs of blessing that are now sealed up. Even the wives who were not their husbands' choice, and therefore never had anything of a real wife's lot, even the disappointed old maids or the spoilt girls, do their best in their distorted position; when a moment for action or liberty comes they show that their heart is still in the right place, even though it be not a wholly fresh, courageous heart.

And of the powerful women, who pioneer their own way, and whose career is easier to follow, because it is more dramatic, it may be said that their very crime does but show the obverse side of the devotedness that could have made them thorough women.

The strength of Ibsen's drawing of men's character has never

been questioned ; men recognize past times and themselves through them ; nor can these impressions ever be forgotten. But these chiefly negative representations are not his most beautiful. His most beautiful things are his positive pictures of womanhood, and they only are (like Shakespeare's) clearly marked and completely carried out. The friendly hopeful light they shed only strikes our eyes, perhaps, when thrown into a strong contrast with the view man has hitherto held as to the position of the sexes. The poet has cut his way right through the thorny wood to the dwelling where womanliness is to be found. After that it depends upon each man whether he will follow the path and try to raise the newly-roused woman to full consciousness.

The end of the story of the sleeping wood Ibsen leaves to the reader. How he has carried it out we know now, and how his own way is to show woman respect by his poetry ; how cautious, how intensely modest he is, how manly his honesty is, how artistically chaste, how free from all sentimentality, all flowery language, all patronizing approval. Ibsen's method is not to get a chorus, but to secure silence and transparent air round his object. He waits, like a believer, rather to get to know something than get to say something, when by one great poem after another he carefully opens the way to the fresh new forces in humanity : Woman.

Ibsen considers that it is from man's side that the greatest hindrances come to the realization of marriage on earth—unity, positive purity, complete oneness of life and work between man and woman ; but that woman increases man's difficulties in getting into the right way, because she does not understand his temptations, and has not learnt to cherish a noble respect for his fight.

Man has inherited more than woman has of the disordered instincts that result from all false marriage in countless previous generations. The physical and spiritual laws are yet unknown which enable heredity to give this different stamp to the two sexes, and thus a great difference in the difficulties of life's problems. How the matter actually stands is, on the contrary, plain to every one, and also that even the womanly woman will contribute to man's fall while our present social ideas are in force. She does it from want of courage. But the results of an action may be equally great whether it was intentional or unconscious. The momentary unconscious crime is often a result of our not being developed enough to face the task we shrink from. Whole hosts of such actions or omissions file through the world in silent darkness ; and people who prefer that man should be left in his undeveloped condition take pious comfort from thinking that these evils arise without any blame to the person who set them going. If only no one can be made personally responsible as the cause, they think the evils can be borne with meekness, and they accustom themselves to calling them 'natural'.

evils. No small part of the poet's task is to rouse men from this opiate comfort. He does it not by denying the existence of these evils, but by painting them in all their far-reaching consequences, and making all men collectively responsible for them. The poet, like the thinker, does not consider that it is a part of the world's scheme that it is out of evil good should arise, but knows that it is we ourselves who futilize our common life, and therefore he regards it as no crime to disturb us in our sleepy or pious disregard of bad conditions and false views of life. He sees that the struggle against evil is quite serious enough without our refusing our support to good by retaining habits that unconsciously and irresponsibly work evil. He believes, in short, that the full development of all healthy forces can only lead to good.

The trivial social view against which Ibsen protests is, that for two to become one and blessed is a mere dream, but that marriage is something practical; that while parents alone chose for their children, marriage was on too narrow a basis, but that the happy mean has been found now the approval of all relatives and friends is sought. Against all such shallowness and cynicism Ibsen protests that human passions cannot be controlled by locks or by opiates, and that the only possible help is for passion and duty to go the same way.

There are two ways of working for reform: the politician waits and steers his course, the poet compromises nothing. To illustrate these two ways let us take an example from the physical world.

Human beauty is an exception, whereas it should be the rule. People set to work to attack wrong clothing and food, bad habits at home and at school. Doubtless all this is in the right direction, and some are convinced. But one day, by accident, one of those who have listened and assented opens a book of engravings from Greek sculpture, and seeing perfect beauty, he learns more from that single glance than from all the indirect working of sanitary teaching. He has seen what beauty looks like.

The poet's work gives a similar discovery of inner beauty or moral life. Some of the clearest light Ibsen has so far shed on marriage we get from *Nora*. The problem is set in its purest form; no unfavourable circumstances hinder the working out of marriage; nor does the temper of Nora or Helmer; both are well fitted for married life, and everything points to their being naturally suited to each other. The hindrance lies exclusively in the application of a false view of life, or—if some insist it once contained truth—a view that Western peoples have out-lived. When Helmer said he would work night and day for his wife, his were no empty words. He had done it, he meant to do it; he had been faithfully working for eight years, and there is no sign that he meant to cease. His happiness lay in Nora's being

unruffled. Nor would he dream of curtailing what *he* considers her wife's freedom, *i. e.* the happy play of her imagination. He would deprive her but of one thing—reality. How could he claim to be a "real man," he would say, if he gave it to her? And he so far succeeds in unfitting her for action, that when she takes upon herself to meddle in realities, she immediately commits a crime. He gives her everything but his confidence; not because he has anything to conceal, but because she is a woman.

Thousands who adhere to society's usual view of a right life between man and woman, express it by saying their home is "like a doll's house"; others, more serious, mean that they are glad to see a woman cosy and comfortable in this hard world. Some express disapproval by saying, "Helmer went too far; if he had given Nora a cookery-book instead of a tambourine all would have been well." Others say, "If Nora had but had a nice ordinary woman for her friend instead of that knitting book-keeper, Mrs. Linden, all would have gone smoothly, even the loan from Dr. Rank, which a little tact would have turned into a charming concluding scene."

The only reply to all these is to ask them to read *Nora* through carefully once more, when they will see for themselves all the conditions for a moral marriage laid down. They may be summed up in the one word, Love. But at present Love is an idea to which no clear meaning attaches. Love presumes youth as a rule, but is not the same thing as youth, or even as youth with warm and mutual liking into the bargain. Youth is a glorious thing, but it has its own dangers, and the chief of them is self-deception. It is only too easy for two young people to rock themselves in dreams of bliss without real love, in which case all relation between them is according to Western notions immoral, a point to which marriage makes no difference whatever. Love is confidence; and Mrs. Linden and Krogstad, shipwrecked folks as they were, had better prospects of it in their union than Nora and Helmer had, because they meant to live in future with mutual understanding. For marriage is really a state of being awake to life and activity; at least nine-tenths of it is active; and every piece of activity either mate excludes the other from is a piece of robbery from the marriage winnings or the mutual development marriage is intended to bring about for both, and therefore for humanity, quite apart from whether the activity itself fails or succeeds. It will generally be found that those who dislike *Nora* are those whose view of marriage the play utterly destroys; while those who like the play are those who, with Ibsen himself, would rejoice with all their hearts to see that past ideal of marriage crushed, against which every word in *Nora* quietly strikes a certain death-blow.

If you lose sight of the play's great human interest you come to petty considerations, such as whether *Nora* had a really large nature and Helmer a stupid one, or that Ibsen means very little in it after all, or as to the effect it is likely to have in making foolish young people neglect their duties and turn from Christianity to Nihilism.

A poetical work reveals an idea, a truth that has a perfect right to its place among the truths of the world; a truth that is so permanent and indestructible, that if the time has come for that truth, it cannot be injured by neglect, or evaded or turned aside, though he who attempts to injure it may thereby injure and destroy himself. A perfect poem sets forth an idea perfectly. Either *Nora* is not a poetical work, or at any rate not a perfect one, or else by means of the idea it sets forth it is perfectly easy to find our way into every corner of the play, and get a clearer and deeper knowledge of it than would be possible from, *e. g.*, an historical essay. On the other hand, with anything less than this idea it is impossible to do justice to the play as a whole, or to any of its organic parts.

The idea in *Nora* is: the object of marriage is to make each human personality free. However incontrovertible this may be when laid down as an axiom, does that confer the power of giving it expression in real life, steering one's way among all the difficulties of deceit, inexperience, etc.? Doubtless not; but the poet's work tells us, until the relation between man and woman turns in this direction, the relation is not yet Love. This is the idea in *Nora*, freed from all side issues, and no other key will unlock it.

It is of course possible to find one's way through schematic plays, products of a weaker time than ours, without grasping the main idea. But in our realistic art, when people speak the language of their own passions and prejudices, we could never reach the main idea through the various details, in so many ways may an individual utterance be taken. The poet does not create ideas, as a rule he can hardly be said to discover them; in most cases they have already become human property, as it were, amongst a few of his most thoughtful and cultured contemporaries. But it is the poet's art that brings them to light; he communicates them to millions. What is new seems dumb while its spokesmen are the philosophers, statesmen, priests, moralists, critics, sociologists, or publicists. It is as though unsaid till the poet says it; when he has spoken humanity has spoken; the thought is born on the lips of all, and it is for the simple reason that he cannot give it complete utterance until the hour has struck, and humanity has got so far that the new thing is said from necessity.

Some people consider that *Nora* shows the exaggeration of

genius, and not the beautiful balanced revelation of a newly-reached awakenedness in our moral conscience ; others admit that the Oriental ideal of marriage must be given up, but ask why *Nora* ends with a breaking off, and not a warning? *Nora's* own words to Helmer give the answer ; but she speaks so like and so unlike the old morally unconscious being whose development we have been following step by step, that we are unwilling to recognize her words in their full meaning. Perhaps it could be philosophically demonstrated that to say this does her great injustice, the same injustice that she complains her father and husband did her : no one will ever begin to treat her as a human being, no one shows honourable and real respect for her own responsibility, and she has the same right to it as a man has. Perhaps all this could be proved, but feeling is only convinced by feeling or by reality.

Let us then construct another ending to *Nora*. Let us suppose that the doll's house does not fall to pieces, but that Helmer keeps his old delusion as to *Nora's* being a weak creature. There is no doubt that he would act exactly as he spoke ; he would forgive her, and, since the time for education had begun, he would be a most careful schoolmaster. *Nora* would take no step without his help ; she would be just as much tied and bound as before, with no will or conscience of her own.

He says, "I have power to become another man." She replies, "Yes, when your doll is taken from you." She is probably right ; but it is certain that unless it happens, this loving husband, the faithful, and, as some would say, the 'morally' loving man, will never change, never for a moment come near guessing what morality in love really is : the effort to make the beloved one free, awakened, responsible, true, pure-hearted, noble, and strong, instead of enslaving and making the beloved dependent, irresponsible, double, needing help, slavish-minded, and clinging. Helmer, who has such an intense wish to be a patron, and has such an artificially developed gift for patronizing, must continue to believe he possesses at least one being destined for liberty, conscientious life, and personality as his private slave, who is favoured by partiality, and shielded wisely, tenderly, and chivalrously. He will be sure to go on in the belief that there is at least one fellow-creature who has no will but his, even if outside home's shelter he is often tried, as he probably will be, by painful miscalculation in such matters ; e. g. if the Bank staff were to be ungrateful for his fostering care of them, and his humane attempt to absorb their personality in his own. The "doll," the dream-creature to whom he gave *Nora's* shape, is not to be taken from him ; he is to be able to go on hugging that untrue view of half-humanity to his broad breast just as a child hugs its doll. He is to suffer much, because he is an intelligent and sensitive man, but he is not to suffer in *that*

way by having his eyes opened to what Nora is : Woman, or the woman who should have been the angel of freedom to him.

But if this constructed ending to the play be rejected, surely a happy one of some sort could be found? A novelist's mouth must be watering to make Helmer lose his money,—*e. g.* by Krogstad working him out of the Bank,—and then Nora is to work for him and win his love. But we know that Nora has not this sort of ascendancy in development, nor can have with the education life has so far given her. Torvald's illness did not reveal them to each other, nor did eight years' struggle with poverty. Ibsen has intentionally barred that outlet for us. The struggle would only set Nora's energy in motion, till she found it was praised like a good child's task, but not with respect, not with humanity's charter of freedom—open, high-minded, devoted trust. When she saw that that "miracle" did not come she would grow weary. And garlanded slavery under poverty's roof would be no better, but rather worse, than it was under the roof of prosperity.

In all trials common to both Helmer would do his duty, preserve his equilibrium, and remain just what he always was. For he is a 'gentleman'; let us give him full credit for that; but he is not a real man, and years would but mark this more clearly. His principles would dry up into mere maxims, his duty, honour, taste, and judgment into routine, till he ended in being one of those faultless persons whom no one would dream of exchanging ideas with on any subject, great or small, but who, on the contrary, are listened to by tacit understanding with a respectful smile when they are so obliging as to communicate any view they happen to hold.

Some are ready to agree, "We never were deeply imbued with belief in Mr. Helmer's ideality; but why did Nora run away in such haste? We cannot see that she gained anything, poor creature, or that her little children did by losing her motherly care." Let us see if we can justify the mistake with which they thus charge Ibsen. Their words imply that the story of the forgery, the agony of mind during Christmas week, the explanation between husband and wife, were a mere accidental disturbance, that in a week it would all be forgotten, as Helmer says, and buried in a month or two. At first, no doubt, Nora would be merrier and more docile than ever, and Helmer fondler of his wife than even in the days when their home-life first began. But as the weeks went by Nora would be neither her present nor her former self. As the memory of the great day faded, a nervousness would creep over her such as Helmer never dreamt of. Either she would ask his opinion every other minute, evidently to get rid of some secret restlessness, or, without asking it, she would be found undertaking things that in the old days it would

never have occurred to her to attempt alone. And if Helmer did not answer her questions she would cry, and if he quietly expressed his surprise at his wife's taking her own course, she would break out into wounding assertions, always ending with the one that decided him to despatch Krogstad's dismissal: that he is petty.

Helmer would now begin to find it is high time to fulfil his promise of leaving the stage of play, and devoting himself to that of education. He adds that occupation to all his others in an orderly way, and with the great power of getting through work that we know him to possess. He would try first one thing and then another. That Mrs. Krogstad is not the most suitable companion for Nora would be his earliest discovery in his work of reformation. Result: Nora sometimes really avoids Christina, at others—as often as possible—contrives to meet her without Torvald's knowing it. She wants to tell her daily hopes and troubles to the industrious, sympathetic woman who was her friend in childhood, and all the time contrives to appear to her husband as desiring no society but his. The attempt to be Will and Conscience to another shows its usual results: deception, hypocrisy, crooked ways, duplicity, loss of trust, absence of ease, joy, and healthiness in daily intercourse, and a habit of covering the abyss with artificial liveliness that seems to have taken root very quickly.

Let us suppose, however, that Helmer makes himself into a domestic school inspector of Nora's ways with the children, and points out that if she is to do her duty by them and have time for him too, she must shop less and spend less time with her dressmaker. Nora would try; but some day or other in the middle of one of his nursery inspections, questions would burst from her lips such as, *What* is skill with children? *How* much 'self-control' and 'method' is to be expected from them without sacrificing their individuality? and, *What* things ought one to pretend not to see?

Helmer wonders when his discoveries in this strange woman's nature will come to an end, and where she can have got this new barrier from that hinders husband and wife from their common work.

Such signs of self-guidance touch the most sensitive point in his view of life, as they always have done. We can hear him say, as he did once before, "Now we'll put an end to this once and for all."

He is not eager about it; he wishes to spare her so far as possible. He says little; but what he does say so oppresses Nora that she loses what little pleasure she ever took in the development of Ivar, Bob, and Emmy. But when a person like Nora once gets frightened there is an element of rebellion in it; feeling in the dark as she is after self-dependence, when she may

not create something she must at least destroy. So at one time she is cold and dull with the children, at another she spoils them, and fills their heads with the idea they "must not tell papa." The new dominion over her Conscience and Will has only led her to fresh lies; it has only dragged her deeper into the mud, and this time it is the children's turn to go with her and get soiled. Thus Boredom will settle down on that home as on thousands of other homes. But that was not the air that was wafted towards us when the curtain first rose. The air was restless perhaps, but one felt there were possibilities.

Is Helmer a bad man, then; coarse, dilatory, or boisterous and domineering at times? No, he is quoted everywhere as a model husband, and not without reason. He is merely colour-blind in one direction, educated into colour-blindness.

One thing is certain, that amid all this new order of things he yearns for the lark and the squirrel, the careless gaiety of the Nora that used to be, and that is sometimes now when she makes an effort. Then it strikes him that it is unnatural to shut up a young and beautiful woman; so he takes her into society to obliterate the past that perhaps preys on her mind, and to "draw out the child in her nature." For wise men think a woman never grows, or that it is happier for her not to grow, and that she can be stunted in her growth, as it used to be thought puppies could by brandy.

A glance around us shows us many women arrested thus, many rich young souls prevented from ever becoming real women. It is a social murder whose results are most disastrous for human destiny. It means that homes can get amiable hostesses without husbands getting loving wives, or children loving mothers. Will this succeed in Nora's case? She is not a doll, but will Society's stupefying agencies make her into one—a model doll, a splendid example of self-satisfied, undeveloped humanity, who will be described as perfectly *comme il faut*?

Readers who desire this say, "We cannot see into each others' hearts, and Nora's inner life may be anything she pleases; but a well-bred woman should always seem at ease, and make it possible for us to have dealings with her." Nora will never come up to their expectations. There is something untamed in her that will make her sin continually against worldly rules. She might dress as becomingly as any one, but there her likeness to others would end. She does not belong to the class of women whose two sections are the coquette and the prude, both being the Doll grown to full stature. Such women are her only enemies. They can lay aside conscience and ideality without loss of charm, they can never be free nor make others free, never love. They point in the opposite direction—to rule and be ruled; they use freedom's means in the service of slavery. It is useless

to expect this of Nora. Her power of freedom, her need to love and live really are too strong to allow it, and will lead her to break up life again and again if Helmer continues unawakened from his idea that conscience, will, personality, development, human dignity are notions that concern man only, and this not for himself alone, but for woman as represented by him.

The associates Helmer would summon to help him in drawing out Nora by society would find their pupil too hard to manage, too individual, too inscrutable for them. She would win no friends among women of the world. And although she is one of those to whom men feel drawn, she will never secure one thorough friend among them. She does not wish to, since she found out Dr. Rank thought she had been making advances to him. She will behave in a strikingly unsuitable manner in society; either too full of herself or too indifferent. In either case she will wound Helmer's fine sense of what is fitting. Sometimes she will show unrestrained feeling, as she did in the Tarantella, because she is secretly worried about something; at another she will take no interest in what is going on around her. And if anybody in society turns specially to her as though to draw a little nearer to her real self, nothing will be got out of her except some utterly unsuitable answer; an answer to the thing instead of an answer that conveys an agreeable recognition of the questioner's polite attention.

So Nora will get no recompense in society for her losses at home—her husband's growing precision, or the children's mixture of affection and disrespect, when at one time she is able behind their father's back to give them what they want, and at another cannot do what she promised them.

A few glimpses of happiness for Nora, and a sort of sad rest for Helmer, may, however, come into their ruined home; not when the family is alone, for then the tension is only too plain, but when they give small parties, and the hostess is able to lay down her own rules for etiquette, and charms herself into a fancied self-guidance and liberty for a few hours. Young people will feel particularly happy on these occasions, and Nora will flash out for a few moments and seem young again. When all this is over, Torvald, who is still in love with her, will spend long hours in painfully pondering what it *is* that he has done, that his young, happy, warm world has been cut away from under him, that he, though he has continued master in his own home, really *has* no home now?

Need we follow them further?—into the critical years when the absence of ideality has made them grotesque, when young people laugh in Helmer's face at his way of playing *le père noble*; when Nora is middle-aged, and some chance opening of the box where a pair of silk stockings has lain "ever since that night"

tempts from mamma's lips a neat little description of her triumphs at the costume ball, ending with the remark that Emmy has her mother's foot and ankle, but she "must not think of putting on that charming dress and dancing with the tambourine, poor little Emmy ! or let out that she has even seen them ; papa can't bear such things, you know."

Such then is what in the most favourable circumstances a mere 'warning' must have brought Nora and Helmer to, being what they were by nature and education. We should see Nora selfish, but with the selfishness that is more or less in every natural woman's heart, which unchecked and suppressed destroys either her whole woman's personality or the happiness and honour of all around her, but raised to the moral plane of freedom would, on the contrary, have saved both. And we should see Helmer selfish, in a certain sense more so than Nora ; but selfish with the egoism of his sex, with satisfaction that he is a man, and not a woman, rather than with any very exaggerated individual egoism. He is typical of the class of men on whom the punishment falls most heavily of women not getting a true human education, but being brought up to self-deception instead, and it is rather the punishment of his whole sex that he bears than any tragic fate of his own in bearing the consequences of not having promoted his wife's human development.

Let us now see what prospect there is of reconciliation between the Adam and Eve whom Ibsen drives out of their Paradise into the world of consciousness. Everything in the play strengthens our perception of the bare truth that these two people have by their life together brought matters to such a pass, that before anything good can come to them, Helmer must try to come to himself, and Nora to herself. And at the last moment there seems a prospect that they will achieve it some day. And earthly life offers no truer ground for reconciliation than this, if we believe development to be the end of our existence. Every right-thinking person must feel compelled to admit that Nora's fight for existence as it faces her in all its cruelty deserves our love a thousand times more than any return to the doll's house conditions of ruining herself, her husband, and her children ; but this by no means prevents his feeling painfully affected by the idea of Helmer's petted wife, Ivar's, Bob's, and Emmy's merry little mother, going away and shutting the door between herself and them. It is the only violent action in the last scene, and it makes us feel all the indescribable pain that must weigh on that undeveloped, newly-roused being on the threshold between her past and her future.

What is the outlook for him who is left behind on the stage, between his certainty of crushed happiness and the hope of higher things arising ? He thought himself so pure-hearted and

justifiable in everything; he finds he only possessed a favourite slave. Is it only mechanically that he repeats her words, "the greatest miracle," or does a new hope arise within him? The poet bids us think he has some new hope. Is it that Nora will repent and return? Her last words are too clear; she expects a radical change in him. Through all the mist of his senses and prejudices has he not caught a glimpse of the real Nora, the higher Eros, whom Socrates calls the oldest of all the gods, and, bowed to the earth with blushes, yet thankful he has learnt to blush, does he not say to himself, "A woman too is intended to be a human being"? Then he asks, "Am I a human being? Have I not made a slave of her who might have helped me to freedom?"

How near to freedom he is no one can determine, not even the poet himself, because the path to freedom is one that cannot be marked out beforehand. But everything in the play indicates that he will attain it. And if he does, it will be no small matter that in everything but what concerned Nora he was an honest man.

Since the idea in *Nora* is plain to all, we will now inquire what means Ibsen selected from every-day life to make his meaning clear. The kernel of every home is its womanly principle, and the kernel of Ibsen's play is Nora's character. He means to make a modern home go to pieces before our very eyes from some necessity within itself. It must contain everything that can attract: simplicity, gladness, power of work, good temper, gentle and strong regard, love of beauty, merry little children, friends, well-managed servants, good habits, good reputation, a position that has at length been won by praiseworthy endeavours, etc.; but also a husband who has such an essentially false idea of happiness between man and woman, that it has practically undermined this delightful home, and it is ready to fall in at any moment.

The husband, too, is such a pleasant man that his Oriental view of woman is ennobled, so far as a view can be that is so inhuman and wounding to us. His belief, not that humanity is creation's king, but that man is, comes out in a kind, quiet way; if ever otherwise, he soon recovers his Oriental manly dignity, as though to say: I forgot myself. I judged her as though she were a human being. In my haste I overlooked the fact of her being only a woman. But it shall not happen twice. Henceforth I will abide faithful and true to my principle that I, and I only, bear the burden and responsibility for us both.

If these presumptions are sufficiently unmistakable at every turn in the play, the spectator knows from the very beginning that some of the indispensable conditions for healthy develop-

ment are wanting, and that the breaking up of the doll's house is only a question of time.

But it might have lasted a lifetime, as so many false marriages do, and in that case it would not have been a suitable subject for a play. The dramatist did not need for his object a strong character, such as could have set the wrong right, and kept the home together; or a 'passive' woman, whose will is dead; or one with 'a broken heart'; or a superficial person, who ends in being satisfied with trifles; or one who suffers, and weeps, and sighs; or one of those who combine any of these characters with that of a prude or a coquette. Any one of these women would have delayed the climax, so as to destroy dramatic possibilities; nor would a large and highly religious womanly figure have been suitable; still less would one already exhausted by homage to propriety and custom.

Ibsen needed a young creature, loving but undisciplined; full of life, but lacking all principle in thought and action; blind to all but what is nearest at hand, but ready to love with her whole strength, that is, to devote all her happiness to what is nearest her; otherwise, cruel with indifferent carelessness, but only because no notion of the rights of others, of 'strangers,' has ever been presented to her; capable as a child of nature is of stealing on behalf of her own dear ones, but not capable as an artificialized nature is of stealing from them in order to gratify her private vanity before strangers with what she has thus stolen; gentle to those nearest her, but not to others or to herself; an uneducated girl who never had a mother; one who as a daughter and a growing girl had to get what poor little exchange of thought she could in the maids' room; a wife who is obliged to choose as her confidential friend her husband's friend, and not her husband himself; a beautiful, attractive young woman, who feels she is independent, placed in the high position of head of a house, but who, none the less, has come to tricking her husband by lie after lie in daily life, half-consciously longing, and waiting outside in the darkness, for some change that is to come suddenly, "the miracle," she does not exactly know what, but its effect is to be that the activity of her soul and her husband's are no longer to be *allowed* to go different ways; that what *she* tries, what *she* accomplishes, what *she* sacrifices, is to be reckoned as human like his. The poet must find all these elements like mines ready laid in the woman's character, upon which the existence of the home is based. No one of them must fail him when the match is put to the train if the doll's house is to be blown to unrecognizable pieces before our eyes.

Nora is precisely all this. The poet has now what he wants; it is as in real life: the persons of the action have no notion what they are about until the moment of parting.

When all is falling to pieces, and not a moment sooner, they see by a sudden flash how they have been gradually bringing their fate on themselves, so that it destroys all the edifice of their past life: the man by not having considered the woman's personality; the woman by the man having loved a person who does not exist, an illusion the more unfortunate in her case, as it turned her best deeds into faults.

It has been alleged that Nora is not the same person in her concluding scene with Helmer as she is throughout the play. So far as her understanding goes, she is just the same. Her one reproach to Helmer at the end is that he did not take the blame on himself, and her calm at the end is so touching because the spectator knows what Helmer neither knows nor believes, that she was really ready to die to save him from the necessity of taking the blame on himself. For she means it in perfect good faith; in a few minutes she will jump into "the cold, black water," which does not, however, prevent her, with her childish optimism, her habit of succeeding, and her power of telling herself tales (such as of the old gentleman who was to leave her his property), having some hope that the water might not be cold, or not drown her, or might change her into some new being, whom no anxiety could threaten. For even in this last and most honest resolve to die she is not acting as one fully awake, responsible, and conscious. She is all this for the first time at the moment she breaks away from Helmer and goes. But it is the old Nora, only it is Nora on her most serious side; it is the young and inexperienced woman who, after Helmer's proper little speech gives her the experience that puts an end to her youth, cannot help telling him how boundlessly she once believed in him.

The same objection is urged by those who say that she utters a number of incontestable truths, or, as her enemies describe it, "makes a speech" at the end and "preaches the doctrine of the future." This, were it true, would prove her to be another Nora. But she really speaks as she always has spoken, without any calculation whatever. It is but the outburst of human nature's own consciousness of itself, but it has been so very recently awakened in her. It first awoke in her at the moment when she finally discovered the thing whose pain wrung from her "It became clear to me that I had been living here all these years with a strange man, and had borne him three children. Oh! I cannot bear to think of it! I could tear myself in pieces!"

Till then she had never guessed that her husband's Oriental view of life's task as adjusted to the two sexes had been a serious one, which had reduced her to a mere Thing, day after day—the dearest thing in all the world, but not a human being, not his peer. The moment she not only guessed this, but knew it with the most deadly cold certainty, every spark of womanly

instinct told her in that second all that can ever be taught or known about it.

Nora herself is the Chorus to all the previous action through the general truths she finally utters, but it is precisely because she only gets to know them at the very moment she utters them. It is just on such occasions as this that people do speak, unless feeling chokes their words.

Nora's being able to speak harmonizes with her whole self. Helmer has always been mistaken in his notion that she was 'weak'; it was part of his false theory of a wife. She is rather strong than not, as appears in all her doings. And if women in general come to act more, the same thing will cause surprise in countless cases. Weakness is most often nothing but destroyed power of thinking and doing. It is because her character is so capable of strong devotion that she can go away when she finds she would do harm by staying, and can speak out all the hard new truths, feeling as she does that she is no more fit to stay and educate him into them than he is to educate her.

But people shoot beside the mark, too, when they will not see the subject of *Nora* as one of universal human application, when they think that Ibsen wanted to make Helmer hateful. What Ibsen wanted to make hateful, and what he has made hateful, is Helmer's false view of half humanity—a view that still is the view of life that most men hold, and that makes it possible for a man to be every inch a gentleman without being for that reason a human being; to believe he loves a woman, and at the same time think he can be Will and Conscience for her; that makes it possible for a woman to call these habits of thought in men Chivalry, and exercise every quality of her inner and outward being only to secure the small triumphs of an odalisk, while at the same time she believes herself a pure-hearted woman, believes that she loves, believes that she really *lives*.

It is this social pest, this expression of what is unnatural, that Ibsen hates. For it is unnatural, standing as it does side by side with such a highly-developed notion of individuality as that now current in society. And Ibsen hates this not because he delights to hate, but because, as a poet, he loves individuality with all his heart, and womanly individuality above all, as the friendly, dawning promise for all our retarded human development, as the most promising side in the gospel of Man, as the daylight side of the future.

FRANCES LORD.

176, Lambeth Road, London,
November, 1882.

NORA.

ACT I.

A room comfortably and tastefully, but not expensively, furnished.

(To the right a door leads to the Hall; to the left another door in the background to Helmer's study. Between the two doors a piano-forte.

In the middle of the left wall a door, and somewhat nearer the front a window. Near the window a round table with an arm-chair and a small sofa. In the right wall, somewhat to the back, a door. In the same wall, more forward, a stove of porcelain, by it a couple of arm-chairs and a rocking-chair. Between the stove and the side door a small table. Engravings on the walls. An étagère with china and small curiosities. A small book-case of showily-bound books. Carpet. A fire burns in the stove. It is winter.)

SCENE I.

NORA. A PORTER. ELLEN. Then HELMER. *The bell rings in the hall outside. Presently the hall door is heard opened. NORA walks into the room humming contentedly. She is in walking dress, and has several parcels in her arms, which she lays on the right-hand table. She leaves the door into the hall open behind her, and a PORTER is seen standing outside, carrying a Christmas tree and a basket; he gives these to the maid-servant who opened the door.*

NORA.

Be sure you hide the Christmas tree most carefully, Ellen; so that the children don't on any account catch sight of it before this evening, when it is dressed and lit. *(To the PORTER, taking out her purse.)* How much?

PORTER.

Sixpence, if you please, ma'am.

NORA.

There is a shilling . . . No, keep the change.

(*The PORTER thanks her and goes. NORA shuts the door. She continues smiling with quiet contentment as she takes off her walking things. Then she takes from her pocket a box of sweetmeats, and eats some. As she does so, she steps cautiously to her husband's door and listens.*) Yes; he is home. (*She begins humming again, walking to the right-hand table.*)

HELMER (*in his room*).

Is that my lark who is twittering outside there?

NORA (*busy opening some of her parcels*).

Yes, it is.

HELMER.

Is it the little squirrel running about?

NORA.

Yes.

HELMER.

When did it get home?

NORA.

Just this minute. (*Hides the box of sweetmeats in her pocket and wipes her mouth.*) Come in here, Torvald, and see what I have bought.

HELMER.

I can't be interrupted now. (*A little later he opens the door and looks in, pen in hand.*) 'Bought,' did you say? What! all that heap of things? Has my little spendthrift bird been wasting more money?

NORA.

But, Torvald, we really can waste a little now. It is positively the first Christmas we aren't obliged to pinch.

HELMER.

Yes; but I'll tell you what: We mustn't waste money either.

NORA.

Still, Torvald, we may venture to spend a little already, mayn't we? just a very, very little. You have really got a capital position, and you'll be earning ever so much money.

HELMER.

Yes, from New Year's Day. But there is a whole quarter before my next salary is due.

NORA.

Never mind; we can borrow for that little time.

HELMER.

Nora! (*He steps towards her and takes her playfully by the ear.*) Is your heedlessness running away with you again? Supposing that I borrowed fifty pounds to-day, and you spent it during Christmas week, and that on New Year's Day a tile blew off the roof and struck my head, and I were . . .

NORA (*stopping his mouth*).

Stuff! How can you say such horrid things!

HELMER.

But, supposing anything of the kind were to happen. What then?

NORA.

If such a misfortune were to happen, I should not care whether I had debts or whether I hadn't.

HELMER.

But what about the people I had borrowed from?

NORA.

Those people! Who would trouble about them? They would be strangers, of course.

HELMER.

Nora, Nora! you are a mere baby. But seriously, dear child, you know my way of thinking about such matters. No debts! Never borrow! Home life ceases to be free and beautiful directly its foundations are Borrowing and Debts. We two have held out bravely till now, and we will do so for the little time now remaining.

NORA (*going to the fireplace*).

Ye—s. Just as you like, Torvald.

HELMER (*following her*).

Come, come; my lark must not let her wings droop immediately . . . What! wry faces? (*takes out his purse*). Nora, what do you think I've got here?

NORA (*turning round quickly*).

Money!

HELMER.

There (*gives her some notes*). By Jove! don't I know that all sorts of things are wanted at Christmas?

NORA (*counting*).

Ten, twenty, thirty, forty. Oh! thank you, thank you, Torvald. This will help me on for a long while to come.

HELMER.

That is just what I hope.

NORA.

Yes, indeed; for a long while. But now you must come too, and see all I have been buying. And so cheap! Look, here is a new suit for Ivar, and a little sword as well. Here are a little horse and a trumpet for Bob. And here are a doll and a cradle for Emmy. They are only common; but she will soon pull them all to pieces. And here I've got dresses and neckties for Ellen and Mary Ann. Only I ought to have got something better for Mary Ann.

HELMER.

And what is that in the other parcel?

NORA (*crying out*).

No, Torvald, you're not to see that before this evening.

HELMER.

Oh! ah. But now tell me, you little spendthrift, what you have got for yourself.

NORA.

Never mind me. I don't want anything for myself.

HELMER.

But I am sure you do. Just tell me something sensible you would like to have.

NORA.

No; I really know of nothing . . . Yes; listen, Torvald.

HELMER.

Well?

NORA (*playing with his coat buttons, without looking him in the face*).

If you want to give me something, you might, you know, you might . . .

HELMER.

Well, well? Out with it!

NORA (*quickly*).

You might give me the money, Torvald. Only just as much as you think you can spare; then I will buy myself something with it later on.

HELMER.

But, Nora—

NORA.

Oh, please do, dear Torvald, I beg and implore you. Then I would hang the money in lovely gilt paper on the Christmas tree. Wouldn't that be funny?

HELMER.

What do people call the bird who always spends everything?

NORA.

Yes, I know: a spendthrift, of course. But please do what I ask you, Torvald. Then I shall have time to think what I most want. Is not that very sensible? Come!

HELMER (*smiling*).

Certainly; that is to say, it would be if you really kept the money I gave you, and really bought yourself something with it. But it all goes in housekeeping, and for all sorts of useless things, and then I have to find more.

NORA.

But, Torvald . . .

HELMER.

Can you deny it, Nora dear? (*He puts his arm round her.*) My lark is the dearest little thing in the world; but she needs a very great deal of money. No one would believe how expensive it comes to keep such a little bird.

NORA.

Rubbish! how can you talk so? I am sure I am as careful as I can be.

HELMER (*smiling*).

Very true,—as careful as you can be. But you can't be careful at all.

NORA (*hums and smiles in quiet satisfaction*).

Hm—m. You should just know, Torvald, what expenses larks and squirrels have.

HELMER.

What an odd little woman you are! Just like your father—always eager to get hold of money. But the moment you have it, it seems to slip through your fingers somehow; you never know how you got rid of it. Well, one must take you as you are. It's in the blood. Yes, my dear Nora, you may say what you please, but things of that sort are inheritable.

NORA.

Ah! there are many things I wish I had inherited from father.

HELMER.

And I couldn't wish you to be anything but exactly what you are—my own, true, little lark. But . . . I say . . . it strikes me . . . you look so, so—what shall I call it?—to-day . . . so suspicious.

NORA.

Do I?

HELMER.

Yes, really. Look me full in the face.

NORA (*looking at him*).

Well?

HELMER (*threatening with his finger*).

Hasn't that little mouth, that is so fond of sugar-plums, been eating some in the town?

Gracious! no. How can you think anything of the kind about me?

HELMER.

Didn't the little mouth just look in at the confectioner's?

NORA.

No, I assure you, Torvald. . .

HELMER.

Not to taste one dainty dish?

NORA.

No; most certainly not.

HELMER.

Not so much as to try a few sweetmeats?

NORA.

No, Torvald, I really do assure you. . . .

HELMER.

Well, well, well; of course I'm only joking.

NORA (*goes to the right-hand table*).

I should not think of doing what you disapprove of.

HELMER.

I know, dear; and you have given me your word (*steps to her*). No; keep your little Christmas secrets all to yourself, Nora, dear. They will come to light this very evening, when the Christmas tree is lit.

NORA.

Have you also thought to invite Doctor Rank?

HELMER.

No. But that is not necessary; it is an understood thing that he dines with us. Besides, I shall tell him when he looks in to-day. I have ordered some capital wine. Nora, you cannot think how I look forward to this evening!

NORA.

So do I. And how the children will shout for joy, Torvald!

HELMER.

Oh! it really is glorious to know that one has made one's position, and has ample means. Isn't the consciousness of it a great enjoyment?

NORA.

I should think it is, indeed.

HELMER.

Do you recollect last Christmas? Three whole weeks beforehand you used to shut yourself up till long past midnight in order to make flowers to trim the Christmas tree, and get ready all the other magnificent things to surprise us with. It was the most wearisome time I ever lived through.

NORA.

It did not weary me at all.

HELMER (*smiling*).

We did not see much for your pains.

NORA.

Oh! will you never leave off teasing me about *that*? How could I help it if the cat did get in and tear everything I had made to pieces?

HELMER.

To be sure, you couldn't help it, my poor little Nora. You set to work to prepare us a treat with the best will in the world, and that is the chief matter. . . . But, nevertheless, it is a good thing that hard times are over.

NORA.

It is, Torvald.

HELMER.

Now I needn't sit here all by myself, getting more bored every minute; and you needn't tire your eyes and your delicate little fingers. . . .

NORA (*clapping her hands*).

It is really true, isn't it, Torvald, that I needn't do it any more? Oh! how splendid! (*takes his arm*). And now I will tell you, darling, how it has been striking me we ought to arrange matters. . . . Directly Christmas is over (*the hall door-bell rings*). . . . Oh, there's a ring! (*she advances part way across the room*). That is somebody come to call. How vexing!

HELMER.

I am 'not at home' to callers. Don't forget that.

SCENE II.

THE PRECEDING. ELLEN.

ELLEN (*in the doorway to NORA*).

A strange lady wishes to see you, ma'am.

NORA.

Show her in.

ELLEN (*to HELMER*).

And the Doctor is just come, sir.

HELMER.

Has he gone into my study?

ELLEN.

Yes, sir (*Helmer goes into his study. Ellen brings in Mrs. Linden, in travelling costume, and shuts the door behind her*).

SCENE III.

NORA. MRS. LINDEN.

MRS. LINDEN (*timidly and slowly*).

How do you do, Nora?

NORA (*uncertain who she is*).

How do you do?

MRS. LINDEN.

I dare say you do not know me again.

NORA.

No, I really. . . oh, yes—I think (*breaking forth*).
What! Christina! Is it really you?

MRS. LINDEN.

Yes; it is I indeed.

NORA.

Christina! and to think I did not recognise you! How could I not. . . (*More softly*.) How altered you are, Christina!

MRS. LINDEN.

Yes; in nine. . . ten long years.

NORA.

Is it really so long since we met? Yes, it positively is.
Oh! the last eight years have been a happy time, I can

tell you. And now you have come to town? all this long journey in mid-winter! That was brave of you.

MRS. LINDEN.

I have this moment arrived by the train.

NORA.

In order to have some fun at Christmas time, to be sure. Oh, how delightful that is! Yes, fun we certainly will have. But take your things off. Aren't you frozen? (*helps her to take her things off*). There! now we will sit down here cosily by the fire. No; in that arm-chair; I will sit here in the rocking chair. Yes, now you are showing me your dear old face again. It was only the first moment I saw you. . . . But you are a little paler, Christina, and perhaps a shade thinner, too.

MRS. LINDEN.

And much, much older, Nora.

NORA.

Yes, perhaps a little older, too—a little wee bit, not much. (*She suddenly stops; seriously.*) Oh! what a thoughtless creature I am! Here I sit chattering on, and—Dear, good Christina, can you forgive me?

MRS. LINDEN.

What do you mean, Nora?

NORA (*softly*).

Poor Christina! is it true you are a widow?

MRS. LINDEN.

Yes; three years ago.

NORA.

Ah! I was sure of it. I read it in the newspaper, you know. Oh, do believe, Christina dear, I often meant to write to you then; but I kept putting it off, and something always hindered me.

MRS. LINDEN.

I can very well understand that, Nora dear.

NORA.

No, Christina; it was dreadful of me. Oh, you poor darling! how much you must have gone through. . . . And he really left you nothing in the world to live upon?

MRS. LINDEN.

No.

NORA.

And no children either?

MRS. LINDEN.

No.

NORA.

Then really nothing whatever?

MRS. LINDEN.

Not even a sorrow or a regret.

NORA (*looking at her incredulously*).

But, my dear Christina, how is that possible?

MRS. LINDEN (*smiling sadly and stroking her hair*).

Oh, it happens so sometimes, Nora.

NORA.

So utterly lonely. . . How awfully hard that must be for you! I have three of the dearest children ever that were. But I can't show them to you just now; they are out walking with nurse. However, now you must tell me your whole story.

MRS. LINDEN.

No, no, I would rather hear yours.

NORA.

No; you must begin; I won't be egotistical to-day. To-day I will think of you only. But one thing I really must tell you. Or do you know already what great happiness has fallen to our lot in the last few days?

MRS. LINDEN.

No. What is it?

NORA.

Only think! My husband has been made Manager of the Joint Stock Bank.

MRS. LINDEN.

Your husband! Oh, that is really a great piece of luck.

NORA.

Yes; tremendous, isn't it? A professional man's position is so uncertain, especially when he will not be concerned in any business except what is fit for a gentleman and

respectable. And naturally Torvald would not do any other business ; and in that matter I quite agreed with him. Oh ! you may well believe how heartily glad we are. He will enter his new position on New Year's Day, and then he will have a large salary, and high percentages on the business done. In future we shall be able to live in a very different style from the way we have lived hitherto—just as we please, in fact. Oh, Christina, I feel so light and happy. . . It really is beautiful, isn't it, to have a great deal of money, and be able to live without anxiety. Now isn't it?

MRS. LINDEN.

Yes ; it cannot but be delightful to have bare necessities.

NORA.

No, not only bare necessities, but a great deal of money—heaps !

MRS. LINDEN (*smiling*).

Nora, Nora, haven't you grown sensible yet ? In our school days you were a great spendthrift.

NORA (*quietly smiling*). ✱

Yes ; Torvald says I am so still (*threatens with her finger*). But 'Nora, Nora,' is not so silly as you all think. Oh ! our circumstances have really not been such that I could be a spendthrift. We both had to work.

MRS. LINDEN.

You as well ?

NORA.

Yes, really—light fancy work : knitting, crochet, and things of that sort (*vaguely*), and also other work. I suppose you know that when we married Torvald quitted the Government service ? He had no prospect of being promoted, and yet he certainly had to earn more money than before. But I do assure you that the first year he over-worked himself quite terribly. You can easily understand that he was naturally obliged to get all the extra work he could and toil from morning till night. It was too much for him, and he fell dangerously ill. Then the doctors declared it was necessary for him to go to the South.

MRS. LINDEN.

Yes ; you spent a whole year in Italy, didn't you ?

NORA.

We did. It was not an easy matter to arrange, I can assure you. Ivar was only just born then. But we had to go. Oh, it was a delicious journey! And it saved Torvald's life. But it cost an awful sum of money, Christina.

MRS. LINDEN.

You needn't tell me that, dear.

NORA.

Three hundred pounds. That's a great deal, isn't it?

MRS. LINDEN.

But in such cases it is, after all, a most fortunate thing to have the money to spend.

NORA.

Yes; I ought to tell you I got it from father.

MRS. LINDEN.

Ah; I see. It was just about the time he died, I think?

NORA.

Yes, Christina, just then. And think what it was for me not to be able to go to him and nurse him! I was expecting little Ivar's birth daily. And then I had my Torvald to nurse, who was dangerously ill too. Dear good father! I never saw him again, Christina. Oh! that is the hardest thing I have had to bear since I married.

MRS. LINDEN.

I know you were devotedly fond of your father. And then you and your husband started for Italy?

NORA.

Yes; a month later. By that time we had the money; and the doctors were so peremptory.

MRS. LINDEN.

And your husband returned completely cured?

NORA.

Sound as a bell.

MRS. LINDEN.

But—the Doctor?

NORA.

What about him?

MRS. LINDEN.

I thought your servant said that the gentleman who came in just when I did was the Doctor. . .

NORA.

Yes, it was Doctor Rank. But he does not pay any professional visits here. He is our best friend, and comes in to chat with us at least once every day. No, Torvald has not had an hour's illness since we went to Italy. And the children, too, are so healthy and well, and so am I. (*Jumps up and claps her hands.*) Oh, dear! oh, dear! Christina, it is indeed delicious to live and be happy!—Oh, but it is really horrible of me! I am talking about nothing but my own concerns (*sits down upon a footstool close to her and lays her arms on Christina's knee*). Oh! don't be angry with me for it. Now just tell me, is it really true that you couldn't endure your husband? Why ever did you marry him, then?

MRS. LINDEN.

My mother was living at that time, and she was ill and helpless; and then I had my two younger brothers to provide for. I considered it my duty to accept him.

NORA.

Oh, yes. I dare say you were right there. Then he was rich in those days?

MRS. LINDEN.

Very well off indeed, I believe. But his business was not sound, Nora. When he died it all fell to pieces, and there was nothing left.

NORA.

And then?

MRS. LINDEN.

Then I had to try to make my way by keeping a small shop, a little school, and anything else I could get. The last three years have been for me one long working-day, without a moment's rest. But now it is over, Nora dear. My poor mother no longer needs me: she is at rest in her grave. Nor do the boys need me: they are in business, and can provide for themselves.

NORA.

How relieved you must feel!

MRS. LINDEN.

No, Nora : only inexpressibly empty. To have nobody you can devote your life to ! (*stands up restless*). That is why I could not bear to stay any longer in that out-of-the-way little town. It must be easier to find something here that really has a claim upon one and occupies one's thoughts. If I could but be so fortunate as to get a fixed post—some office-work.

NORA.

But, Christina, that is so terribly tiring, and you look so overdone already. It would be far better for you if you could go to some cheerful watering-place for a while.

MRS. LINDEN (*going to the window*).

I have no father who could give me the money to go, Nora.

NORA (*rising*).

Oh ! don't be vexed with me.

MRS. LINDEN (*going towards her*).

No, it is rather I who must beg your indulgence, Nora dear. The worst of a position like mine is that it makes one bitter. One has nobody to work for, and yet one is obliged to be always slaving and scraping together. Besides, one must live, and so one gets selfish. When you told me of the happy change in your circumstances,—you'll hardly believe it ;—but I rejoiced more on my own account than on yours.

NORA.

How do you mean? Ah ! I see. You mean Torvald could do something for you.

MRS. LINDEN.

Yes ; I thought so.

NORA.

And he shall, too, Christina dear. Just leave that to me. I shall lead up to it in the most delicate manner in the world, and think of something pleasant in order to incline him favourably to it. Oh ! I should so like to do something for you.

MRS. LINDEN.

How good of you, Nora, to take up my cause so zealously—it is doubly good in you, who know so little of the troubles and difficulties of life.

NORA.

I? I know so little of—?

MRS. LINDEN (*smiling*).

Bless me! a little fancy-work, and things of that sort. You are a mere baby, Nora.

NORA (*tosses her head and paces the room*).

I would not be so positive if I were you.

MRS. LINDEN.

Really?

NORA.

You are like everybody else. You none of you think that I could be of any real use.

MRS. LINDEN.

Come, come, darling—

NORA.

—that I have had my trials, too, in this troublesome world.

MRS. LINDEN.

Dear Nora, you have just finished telling me the whole story of your trials.

NORA.

I dare say—the little ones. (*Softly*.) The big trials I haven't told you a word about.

MRS. LINDEN.

What great trials? What do you mean?

NORA.

You look at me so patronisingly, Christina; but you wouldn't if you knew all. You are proud of having worked so hard and so long for your mother.

MRS. LINDEN.

I am sure I patronise nobody. But it is true that I am proud and glad that it was my privilege to secure my mother the evening-time of her life tolerably free from care.

NORA.

And you are also proud of having done all you did for your brothers.

MRS. LINDEN.

It seems to me I have a right to be proud of it.

NORA.

I quite agree. But now I will tell you something, Christina : I, too, have something to be proud and glad about.

MRS. LINDEN.

I don't doubt it. But what do you mean ?

NORA.

Not so loud. Suppose Torvald were to hear ! On no account must he or anybody know it, Christina ; nobody but you.

MRS. LINDEN.

What can it be, my dear ?

NORA.

Come over here (*draws her beside her on the sofa*). Yes . . . I too have something to be proud and glad about. It was I who saved Torvald's life.

MRS. LINDEN.

Saved his life ? How saved his life ?

NORA.

I told you about our Italian journey. But for that he must have died.

MRS. LINDEN.

So I understood, dear ; and your father gave you the needful money.

NORA (*smiling*).

Yes ; so Torvald and everybody else believes ; but—

MRS. LINDEN.

But . . .

NORA.

Father didn't give us one penny. It was I who found the money.

MRS. LINDEN.

You ? The whole of that large sum ?

NORA.

Three hundred pounds. What do you say to that ?

MRS. LINDEN.

But, my dear Nora, how was it possible? Did you win it in some lottery?

NORA (*contemptuously*).

In a lottery? Pooh! What would there have been clever in that?

MRS. LINDEN.

Then wherever did you get it from?

NORA (*hums and smiles mysteriously*).

Hm; tra-la-la-la!

MRS. LINDEN.

For you certainly couldn't borrow it.

NORA.

No? Why not?

MRS. LINDEN.

My dear love! how could a wife without her husband's consent borrow such an important sum as that?

NORA (*throwing her head back*).

Oh! when the wife is one who has some slight knowledge of business, a woman who knows how to set about things with a little wisdom, then . . .

MRS. LINDEN.

But, Nora, I can't in the least comprehend—

NORA.

Nor need you. It has never been stated that I borrowed the money. Perhaps I got it in another way (*throws herself back on the sofa*). I may have got it from some ardent swain or another. When anybody is so distractingly pretty as I am . . .

MRS. LINDEN.

You are a fool, Nora.

NORA.

Now I am sure you are intensely curious, Christina . . .

MRS. LINDEN.

Listen to me for a moment, Nora dear. Haven't you been a little indiscreet?

NORA (*sitting upright again*).

Is it indiscreet to save one's husband's life?

MRS. LINDEN.

It seems to me it was indiscreet that you, without his knowledge . . .

NORA.

But he mightn't know anything about it. Can't you comprehend that? He was not to guess for a single moment how ill he was. The doctors told me, and me only, that his life was in danger, that nothing could save him but living for a time in the South. Don't you suppose I should have tried to manage it in some other way first? I laid before him how nice it would be for me if I could go a journey abroad such as other married ladies have been; I wept and prayed; I said he ought to consider my circumstances; it was really his duty to give me my own way; and then I hinted that he could of course borrow the money. But when I said that, Christina, he got almost angry. He said I was giddy, and that it was his duty as a husband not to yield to my tempers and fancies—yes, that was the word he used, I believe. Very well, I thought, 'but saved your life must be;' and then I found a way to do it.

MRS. LINDEN.

And did not your husband learn from your father that the money was not from him?

NORA.

No; never. Father died within those few days. I meant to have let him into my secret and begged him to tell nothing. But as he was so ill . . . unhappily it was not necessary.

MRS. LINDEN.

And have you never since then taken your husband into your confidence?

NORA.

Dear me! What can you be thinking of? Tell him, when he is so strict on the point of not borrowing? And added to that—for Torvald, with his man's self-reliance, to know that he owed anything to me would be painful and humiliating to the last degree. It would entirely change the relation between us; our beautiful, happy home would never again be what it is now.

MRS. LINDEN.

Will you never tell him?

NORA (*thoughtfully, half-smiling*).

Yes,—later on perhaps,—after many years, when I have ceased to be so pretty as I am now. You mustn't laugh at me. Of course I mean when Torvald is not so fond of me as he is now; when he no longer gets any amusement out of seeing me skipping about, and dressing up and acting. Then it might be rather a good plan to have something in the background. (*Breaking off.*) What nonsense! That time will never come. Now, what do you say to my grand secret, Christina? Am I not of some real use? Moreover, you will believe me when I say, the affair gave me much anxiety. It was really not easy for me to meet my engagements punctually. You must know, Christina, that in the world of business there is something that is called paying off, and quarterly interest, and they are always so terribly hard to tide over. That compelled me to pinch a little, here and there, wherever I could. I could not lay anything aside out of the housekeeping money, for of course Torvald had to live well. Nor could I let the children go about badly dressed. All I received for that purpose I had to expend on it. The dear, darling children!

MRS. LINDEN.

And so your own personal expenses had to be restricted? Poor Nora!

NORA.

Yes, naturally. It was the first thing I thought of. Whenever Torvald gave me money for clothes and similar things, I never used more than half of it; I always bought the simplest and cheapest materials. It is most fortunate that everything suits me so well; so Torvald never noticed anything wrong about my dress. But it was often very hard, Christina dear. For it really is very nice to be beautifully dressed. Now, isn't it?

MRS. LINDEN.

Indeed it is.

NORA.

Well, and besides that, I had other sources of income. Last winter, for instance, I was so lucky as to get a heap of copying work to do. Then I used to shut myself up

every evening and write far on into the night. Oh, sometimes I was so tired, so dreadfully tired. And yet it was amusing to work in that way and earn money, I almost felt as if I were a man.

MRS. LINDEN.

But how much have you been able to pay off from this debt?

NORA.

Well, now, that I can't precisely say. In business like this, you see, it is very hard to keep exact accounts. I only know that I paid everything back that I could scrape together. Sometimes I really didn't know what to do next (*smiles*). Then I used to sit down here and imagine that a very rich old gentleman was in love with me.

MRS. LINDEN.

What! Which gentleman?

NORA.

Oh! a mere story—that he was now dead, and that when his will was opened, there stood in large letters: 'Pay over at once everything of which I die possessed to that charming person, Mrs. Nora Helmer. . .'

MRS. LINDEN.

But, dear Nora, what gentleman was it?

NORA.

Dear, dear, can't you understand? The old gentleman never existed: it was only what I used to sit down and think and dream, when I positively had no notion where I could get any money from. But let us leave him alone,—the tiresome old creature may stay wherever he is for aught I care; I don't trouble my head about him, or his will; for now I am freed from all further anxiety (*springing up*). Oh, Christina, the thought of it does one good. Free from cares! Free, quite free. To be able to play and romp about with the children; to have things tasteful and refined and comfortable in the house, exactly as Torvald likes it all to be! And then the spring will soon return with the glorious blue sky. Perhaps then we shall be able to have a short outing. Oh! perhaps I shall get a peep of the sea again. Oh, yes! indeed it is glorious to live and be happy.

(The hall-door bell rings.)

MRS. LINDEN *(rising)*.

There is a ring. Perhaps I had better be going.

NORA.

No; do stay. I am certain nobody will come in here. It is sure to be somebody to see Torvald.

SCENE IV.

THE PRECEDING. ELLEN. *Then* KROGSTAD.

ELLEN *(in the door to the hall)*.

If you please, ma'am, there is a gentleman who wishes to speak to Mr. Helmer.

NORA.

The Bank Manager, you mean.

ELLEN.

Yes, ma'am, if you please, ma'am;—but I didn't know, as the doctor is with him. . .

NORA.

Where is the gentleman?

KROGSTAD *(in the door-way to the hall)*.

It is I, Mrs. Helmer. *(ELLEN goes.)*

(MRS. LINDEN is confused, recovers herself, and turns away to the window.)

NORA *(goes a step towards him, excited, half aloud)*.

You? What does this mean? What do you want to speak with my husband about?

KROGSTAD.

Bank business—to a certain extent. I hold a small post in the Joint Stock Bank, and your husband is now to be our chief, I hear.

NORA.

So you wish to speak about . . . ?

KROGSTAD.

Only about tiresome business, Mrs. Helmer; nothing in the world else.

NORA.

Then will you be so kind as to take a seat in his office over there? (KROGSTAD goes. *She bows indifferently while she closes the door into the hall. Then she walks to the fire-place and looks to the fire.*)

SCENE V.

NORA. MRS. LINDEN.

MRS. LINDEN.

Nora, who was that man?

NORA.

A Mr. Krogstad. He used to be in the law.

MRS. LINDEN.

Yes; he was.

NORA.

Do you know the man?

MRS. LINDEN.

I used to know him—many years ago. He was in our town a long time as government lawyer.

NORA.

Yes; that is he.

MRS. LINDEN.

How altered he is.

NORA.

He was very unhappily married.

MRS. LINDEN.

And is he now a widower?

NORA.

With a whole troop of children. There! now it's burning properly (*she puts the poker down and pushes the rocking-chair a little aside*).

MRS. LINDEN.

He takes up *all sorts* of business, people say.

NORA.

Does he? I dare say. I don't know. . . But don't let us think of business—it is so tiresome.

SCENE VI.

THE PRECEDING. RANK (*coming out of HELMER'S room*).

RANK (*still in the door-way, speaking over his shoulder*).

No, no; I won't disturb you. I'll just go and chat to your wife for a little while (*shuts the door and sees Mrs. Linden*). Oh, I beg your pardon. I am in the way here too.

NORA.

No, not in the least (*introduces them*). Doctor Rank—Mrs. Linden.

RANK.

Oh, indeed, that is a name often heard in this house. I think I just passed you on the stairs as we entered.

MRS. LINDEN.

Yes; I go so very slowly. I can't bear much going upstairs.

RANK.

Oh, I see; some slight accident.

MRS. LINDEN.

It is really due to over-fatigue.

RANK.

No worse than that? Ah! then you have come to town to find some little recreation during the Christmas holiday-time.

MRS. LINDEN.

I have come here to look for work.

RANK.

May I ask if that is an approved remedy for over-fatigue?

MRS. LINDEN.

One must live, Doctor Rank.

RANK.

Yes, the general view of the matter appears to be that it is necessary.

NORA.

Come, Dr. Rank, you yourself want to live.

RANK.

To be sure I do. However miserable I am, I should like to drag on as long as possible. And my patients all cherish the same wish. It is just the same with people who are morally rotten. At this very moment Helmer has got talking to him precisely such a moral hospital-inmate as I mean.

MRS. LINDEN (*catching her breath*).

Ah!

NORA.

Whom do you mean?

RANK.

Oh, it's a fellow called Krogstad, a lawyer, a man you know nothing whatever about—rotten to the very core of his character. But even he began the conversation, as though he were going to say something very important, by saying he must live.

NORA.

Indeed? Then what did he want to talk to Torvald about?

RANK.

I really don't know that; I only gathered that it had something to do with the Joint Stock Bank.

NORA.

I didn't know that Krog—that this Mr. Krogstad had anything to do with the Bank.

RANK.

He has some sort of post there. (*To Mrs. Linden.*) I don't know whether in your part of the country too there are to be found the sort of men who haunt the place only to scent out moral rottenness, and thus get some advantageous post or another. The healthy have no chance against them.

MRS. LINDEN.

Well, after all it is better to open the door to the sick and get them safe in.

RANK (*shrugging his shoulders*).

Yes, so people say. And it is that very consideration which turns society into an hospital.

(NORA, *deep in her own thoughts, breaks into half-choked laughter and claps her hands.*)

RANK.

What are you laughing about? Do you know what society is?

NORA.

What do I care about stupid 'society'? I was laughing over something quite different, something awfully funny. Tell me, Doctor Rank, are all the people employed at the Bank now dependent on Torvald?

RANK.

Is that what strikes you as so awfully funny?

NORA (*smiles and hums*).

Leave me alone, leave me alone (*walks about the room*). Yes, to think that we—that Torvald has now so much influence over so many people really does give me enormous satisfaction (*takes the box from her pocket*). Doctor, will you have a sweetmeat?

RANK.

Oh, dear, dear. Sweetmeats! I thought they were contraband here.

NORA.

Yes; . . . but Christina brought me these.

MRS. LINDEN.

What did you say, dear? I?

NORA.

Oh, well, dear me! You needn't be so frightened. You couldn't possibly know that Torvald has forbidden them. The fact is, he is afraid I might spoil my teeth. But, oh, bother, just for once. It won't hurt, will it, Doctor Rank? (*Puts a sweetmeat into his mouth.*) And you too, Christina. And I will have one at the same time—only a tiny one, or at most two (*walks about again*). Yes, I really am now in a state of extraordinary happiness. There is only one thing in the world that I should really like.

RANK.

Well, and what's that?

NORA.

There's something that I should so like to say,—but for Torvald to hear it.

RANK.

Then why don't you say it to him?

NORA.

Because I daren't, for it sounds so ugly.

MRS. LINDEN.

Ugly?

RANK.

In that case I would not advise you to say it. But you might say it to us, at any rate . . Pluck up your courage. What is it that you would like to say in Helmer's presence . . ?

NORA.

I should like to shout with all my heart Oh! dash it all.

RANK.

Are you out of your mind?

MRS. LINDEN.

My dearest Nora!

RANK.

Say it. There he is.

NORA (*hides the sweetmeat box*).

Hush-sh-sh. (*Helmer comes out of his room, hat in hand, with his overcoat on his arm*)

SCENE VII.

THE PRECEDING. HELMER.

NORA (*going towards him*).

Well, Torvald dear, and have you got rid of him?

HELMER.

Yes; he's gone at last.

NORA.

May I introduce you?—this is Christina, who has come to town.

HELMER.

Christina? Pardon me, but I don't know . . .

NORA.

Mrs. Linden, Torvald dear—Christina Linden.

HELMER (*to Mrs. Linden*).

Ah, indeed! You are an early friend of my wife's, I dare say.

MRS. LINDEN.

Yes; we knew each other in old times.

NORA.

And now only fancy! She has taken this long journey in order to speak to you.

HELMER.

To speak to me!

MRS. LINDEN.

Well, not actually . . .

NORA.

The fact is, Christina is extraordinarily clever in counting-house work to begin with, and then she has such a great wish to work under a really able man, in order to learn even more than she knows already.

HELMER (*to Mrs. Linden*).

Very sensible indeed.

NORA.

And when she heard you were made Bank Manager,—you see the 'Telegraph' has announced it to all the world,—she started off and came here as fast as she could; and, Torvald dear, for my sake you can do something for Christina. Now can't you?

HELMER.

It might not be impossible. I conclude you are a widow?

MRS. LINDEN.

Yes.

HELMER.

And have already had some experience in office-work?

MRS. LINDEN.

A good deal.

HELMER.

Well, then, it is highly probable I can find a niche for you.

NORA (*clapping her hands*).

There now ! there now !

HELMER.

You have just come at a lucky moment, Mrs. Linden.

MRS. LINDEN.

Oh ! how can I thank you enough ?

HELMER (*smiling*).

There is no occasion to (*puts his overcoat on*). But to-day you must excuse me.

RANK.

Wait ; I'll go with you (*fetches his fur-lined coat from the hall and warms it at the fire*).

NORA.

Don't be out long, dear Torvald.

HELMER.

Only an hour ; not longer.

NORA.

Are you going also, Christina ?

MRS. LINDEN (*putting on her walking things*).

Yes ; I must be off now and look for lodgings.

HELMER.

Then perhaps we can go together.

NORA (*helping her*).

How vexatious that we should have no spare room to offer you ; but it really is quite impossible.

MRS. LINDEN.

What are you dreaming about ? Good-bye, dear Nora, and thank you for all your kindness.

NORA.

Good-bye for a little while. Of course you'll come back this evening. And you too, Doctor Rank. What ? if you feel well enough ? Of course you will. Only be sure you wrap up warmly. (*They go out talking into the hall. Outside on the doorsteps are heard children's voices.*) There they are ! there they are ! (*She runs to the door and opens it.*)

SCENE VIII.

THE PRECEDING. MARY ANN. THE CHILDREN.

NORA.

Come in ! come in ! (*bends down and kisses the children*).
Oh ! my sweet darling . . . Do you see them, Christina ? Aren't they darlings ?

RANK.

Don't let's stand here in the draught-talking folly.

HELMER.

Come, Mrs. Linden ; people who are not mothers won't be able to stand it if they stay here any longer. (*Rank, Helmer, and Mrs. Linden go. Mary Ann enters the room with the children, Nora also, and shuts the door.*)

SCENE IX.

NORA. MARY ANN. THE CHILDREN.

NORA.

How fresh and merry you look ! And what rosy cheeks you have !—like apples and roses. (*The children talk all at once to her during the following.*) And so you have been having great fun ? That is splendid. Oh, really ! you have been giving Emmy and Bob a slide, both at once. Dear me ! you are quite a man, Ivar. Oh, give her to me a little, Mary Ann. My sweet-heart ! (*Takes the smallest from the nurse and dances it up and down.*) Yes, yes, mother will dance with Bob too. What ! did you have a game of snow-balls as well ? Oh ! I ought to have been there. No, leave them, Mary Ann ; I will take their things off. No, no, let me do it ; it is so amusing. Go to the nursery for a while ; you look so frozen. You'll find some hot coffee on the stove. (*The nurse goes to the room on the left. Nora takes off the children's things and throws them down anywhere, while she lets the children talk to each other and to her.*) Really ! Then there was a big dog there who ran after you all the way home ? But I'm sure he didn't bite you ? No ; dogs don't bite dear dolly little children. Don't peep into those parcels, Ivar. You want to know what that is ? Yes, you are the only people who shall know. Oh, no, no, that is not pretty. What ! must we have a game ? What shall it be,

then? Hide and seek? Yes, let us play hide and seek. Bob shall hide first. Am I to? Very well; I will hide first. (*She and the children play, with laughing and shouting, in the room and the adjacent one to the right. At last Nora hides under the table; the children come rushing in to look for her, but cannot find her, hear her half-choked laughter, rush to the table, lift up the cover, and see her. Stormy shouts. She creeps out, as though to frighten them. Fresh shouts. Meanwhile there has been a knock at the hall door. No one has heard it. Now the door is half opened, and Krogstad is seen. He waits a little; the game is renewed.*)

SCENE X.

NORA. THE CHILDREN. KROGSTAD.

KROGSTAD.

Excuse me, Mrs. Helmer—

NORA (*with a suppressed cry, turns round and half jumps up*).

Oh! What do you want?

KROGSTAD.

Excuse me; the inner hall door was ajar—somebody must have forgotten to shut it.

NORA (*standing up*).

My husband is not at home, Mr. Krogstad.

KROGSTAD.

I know it.

NORA.

Indeed! Then what do you want here?

KROGSTAD.

To say a few words to you.

NORA.

To me? (*To the children softly.*) Go in to the nursery to Mary Ann. What, dear? No, the strange man won't hurt Mamma. When he is gone we will go on playing. (*She leads the children into the left-hand room and shuts the door behind them.*)

NORA (*uneasy, in suspense*).

It was with me you wished to speak?

KROGSTAD.

Yes.

NORA.

To-day? But it is not yet the first—

KROGSTAD.

No; to-day is Christmas Eve. It will depend upon yourself what kind of Christmas happiness is granted you.

NORA.

What do you really want of me? I certainly can't to-day—

KROGSTAD.

We won't discuss that beforehand. It is about another matter. You have a minute to spare?

NORA.

Oh, yes, certainly; I have that, although—

KROGSTAD.

Good. I was sitting over there in the Restaurant, and I saw your husband cross the street.

NORA.

Yes; well?

KROGSTAD.

With a lady.

NORA.

And what then?

KROGSTAD.

May I ask if the lady was a certain Mrs. Linden.

NORA.

Yes.

KROGSTAD.

Who has just arrived?

NORA.

Yes. This morning.

KROGSTAD.

I suppose she is an intimate friend of yours.

NORA.

Certainly she is. But I don't understand . . .

KROGSTAD.

I used to know her too.

NORA.

I know you did.

KROGSTAD.

Really? Then you know all about it. I thought as much. Now, may I ask whether Mrs. Linden is to have some post in the Bank?

NORA.

How can you allow yourself to catechise me in this way—you, a subordinate official of my husband's? But since you have asked, you shall know. Yes, Mrs. Linden is to be employed at the Bank. And it is I who took her by the hand, Mr. Krogstad. Now you know.

KROGSTAD.

Then my guess was right.

NORA (*walking up and down*).

Oh! I should imagine one has a little wee bit of influence. It doesn't follow that because one is only a woman that. . . . When one is in a dependent position, Mr. Krogstad, one ought to take the greatest care not to offend anybody who—hm—

KROGSTAD.

Who has influence?

NORA.

Yes; just so.

KROGSTAD (*taking another tone*).

Mrs. Helmer, will you have the kindness to employ your influence in my favour?

NORA.

What? How do you mean?

KROGSTAD.

Will you be so obliging as to take care that I retain my dependent position at the Bank?

NORA.

What is all this about? Who wants to take your post away, then?

KROGSTAD.

Oh, you needn't pretend ignorance towards me. I can very well comprehend that it cannot be pleasant for your friend to meet me; and I can also comprehend now whom I have to thank for my dismissal.

NORA.

But I assure you . . .

KROGSTAD.

Oh, yes; make no bones about it: there is yet time, and I advise you to use your influence to prevent it.

NORA.

But, Mr. Krogstad, I have absolutely no influence.

KROGSTAD.

None? It seems to me you were saying just now yourself—

NORA.

Of course you were not to understand me in that sense. I! How can you think I should have such influence as that over my husband?

KROGSTAD.

Oh, I've known your husband since our College days. I don't think he is firmer than other husbands are.

NORA.

If you talk disparagingly of my husband I must request you to go.

KROGSTAD.

You are very courageous, my dear Madam.

NORA.

I am no longer afraid of you. When New Year's Day is over I shall soon be out of the whole difficulty.

KROGSTAD (*controlling himself more*).

Now just listen to me, Mrs. Helmer. If needs be, I shall fight as though it were for my life in order to keep my small post in the Bank.

NORA.

Yes; it looks as if you would.

KROGSTAD.

It is not only on account of the pay; that is the part of it that least matters to me. But it is something else. Well, I suppose I'd better make a clean breast of it. Look here; it's this. Of course you know just what everybody else knows—that many years ago I once got into trouble.

NORA.

I think I heard something of the sort.

KROGSTAD.

The matter never came into Court; but from that moment all paths were, as it were, barricaded to me. Then I threw myself into the kind of business which you know about. I was obliged to snatch at something, and I may say this much: I wasn't the worst of the men in that line. But now I ought to clear out of all business of that sort. My sons are growing up; on their account I must try to win back as much respectability as I possibly can. In that direction this post at the Bank was the first step. And now your husband wants to push me back into the mire.

NORA.

But I do assure you, Mr. Krogstad, it is really not in my power to help you.

KROGSTAD.

Because you will not; but I have the means of compelling you to help me.

NORA.

You don't intend to tell my husband that I owe you money?

KROGSTAD.

Hm. Supposing I were to tell him?

NORA.

It would be scandalous of you (*with suppressed tears*). This secret, which is my joy and my pride, he shall not learn in such a vulgar, blunt way—and from you too. You want to put me to the most terrible annoyance.

KROGSTAD.

Only annoyance?

NORA (*hotly*).

But just do it; the consequences will be worse for you than anybody else; for then my husband will see clearly what a bad man you are, and then you certainly will not keep your post.

KROGSTAD.

I asked if it were only domestic unpleasantness that you were afraid of?

NORA.

If my husband gets to know about it he will of course pay the rest without delay ; and then we have nothing more to do with you.

KROGSTAD (*stepping a pace nearer*).

Listen, Mrs. Helmer : either you have rather a weak memory, or you don't know much about business. In that case I must get you to go more deeply into the matter.

NORA.

How will you do that ?

KROGSTAD.

When your husband was ill, you came to me to borrow £300 of me.

NORA.

I knew nobody else.

KROGSTAD.

I promised to find you the money.

NORA.

And you did find it.

KROGSTAD.

I promised to find you the money under certain conditions. You were just then so excited about your husband's illness, and so anxious to get hold of the money for your journey, that you probably did not think twice about the difficulties it involved. It is therefore not superfluous for me to remind you of them. Now, I promised to find you the money in exchange for an acknowledgment which I drew up.

NORA.

Yes, and I signed it.

KROGSTAD.

Very well. But then I added a few lines whereby your father became security for the debt. Your father was to sign this.

NORA.

Was to ? He did sign.

KROGSTAD.

I had left the date blank : that is to say, your father was to insert the date on which he signed the document. Do you recollect this, Mrs. Helmer ?

NORA.

Yes, I believe. . .

KROGSTAD.

Thereupon I gave you the piece of paper that you might send it to your father. Is not that so?

NORA.

Yes.

KROGSTAD.

And of course you did so without delay; for within five or six days you brought me back the acknowledgment duly signed by your father. Then you received from me the sum promised.

NORA.

Well, to be sure; have I not paid it back punctually?

KROGSTAD.

Very fairly; yes. But let us return to the matter we were speaking of. You were in great trouble at the time, Mrs. Helmer?

NORA.

I was indeed.

KROGSTAD.

Your father, too, was very seriously ill, I believe.

NORA.

He was on his death-bed.

KROGSTAD.

And died soon after?

NORA.

Yes.

KROGSTAD.

Now, just tell me, Mrs. Helmer, whether by any chance you happen to recollect which day he died—which day of the month, I mean.

NORA.

Father died on the twenty-ninth of September.

KROGSTAD.

Quite correct; I have made inquiries about it. That is why I cannot explain a remarkable circumstance (*draws from his pocket a piece of writing*).

NORA.

A remarkable circumstance? I do not know. . . .

KROGSTAD.

The remarkable circumstance, dear Mrs. Helmer, is, that your father signed this acknowledgment three days after his death.

NORA.

What? I don't understand. .

KROGSTAD.

Your father died on the twenty-ninth of September. But just look here. Here your father has dated his signature October the 2nd. Is not that remarkable, Mrs. Helmer?

(NORA is silent.)

KROGSTAD.

Can you explain that to me?

(NORA continues silent.)

KROGSTAD.

It is also striking that the words 'October the 2nd' and the year are not in your father's handwriting, but in one which I believe I know. Now this may be explained by supposing that your father forgot to date it, and that somebody added the date by guess work before the fact of his death was known. There is nothing improper in that proceeding. But it is the signature of his name that my question relates to. And is it genuine, Mrs. Helmer? Was it really your father who with his own hand set his name here?

NORA (*after a short silence throws her head back and looks defiantly at him*).

No; it is I who wrote papa's name there.

KROGSTAD.

And are you aware, moreover, that that is a dangerous admission?

NORA.

Why? You will soon get your money.

KROGSTAD.

May I be permitted one more question: Why did you not send the document to your father?

NORA.

It was impossible. Father was then dangerously ill. If I had asked him for his signature I should also have had to tell him what I wanted the money for. But in his condition I really could not tell him that my husband's life hung by a thread. It was quite impossible.

KROGSTAD.

Then it would have been better for you to give up the journey abroad.

NORA.

That was impossible too. My husband's life depended on that journey. I could not give it up.

KROGSTAD.

But did you not consider, then, that it was a fraud on me?

NORA.

I could not take any heed of that. I did not care in the least about you. I could not endure you on account of all the hard-hearted difficulties you made, although you knew how ill my husband was.

KROGSTAD.

Mrs. Helmer, you have evidently no clear idea what you have been really guilty of. But I can assure you it was nothing different from this, nor worse than this, that I once did, and that destroyed my entire position in society.

NORA.

You? Do you want to make me believe that you would have dared to do a courageous act in order to save your wife's life?

KROGSTAD.

The laws inquire little into motives.

NORA.

Then we must have very bad laws.

KROGSTAD.

Bad, or not bad,—if I lay this document before a court of law you will be judged according to the laws.

NORA.

That I do not believe. Do you mean to tell me that a

daughter has not the right to spare her old father, on his death-bed, care and worry? Do you mean to say that a wife has not the right to save her husband's life? I don't know the law precisely, but I am convinced that somewhere or another the law must contain leave for me to have done such things. And you don't know it—you, a lawyer. You must be a bad lawyer, Mr. Krogstad.

KROGSTAD.

I dare say. But business—such business as ours here—I do understand; you believe that? Very well. Now, do as you please. But this I do say to you: that if I am turned out of society a second time, you shall keep me company. (*He bows and goes out through the hall.*)

SCENE XI.

NORA. *Then the CHILDREN.*

NORA (*stands awhile thinking, then she throws her head back*).

Never! To try to frighten me! I am not so simple as that. (*Begins folding the children's clothes; pauses.*) But . . . no; but that is quite impossible. I did it from love.

THE CHILDREN (*in the left door*).

Mamma, the strange man is gone now.

NORA.

Yes, yes; I know. But don't tell any one about the strange man. Do you hear? Not even papa.

THE CHILDREN.

No, mamma; but now will you play with us again?

NORA.

No, no; not now.

THE CHILDREN.

Oh, do, mamma. You did promise.

NORA.

Yes; but I can't just now. Run to the nursery; I have so much to do. Run along, run along, my dear, good children. (*She compels them gently to go into the inner room, and shuts the door behind them.*)

SCENE XII.

NORA. *Then* ELLEN.NORA (*throws herself on the sofa, takes a piece of embroidery and does a few stitches, but soon pauses*).No (*throws the embroidery down, stands up, goes to the door towards the hall, and calls out*). Ellen, bring in the Christmas-tree. (*Goes to the left-hand table and opens the drawer; stands again, thoughtful*). No; but that is quite impossible.ELLEN (*with the Christmas-tree*).

Where shall I stand it, if you please, ma'am?

NORA.

There, in the middle of the room.

ELLEN.

Shall I bring in anything else?

NORA.

No, thank you; I have what I want.

(ELLEN, *who has put down the tree, goes out again*.)NORA (*busy dressing the tree*).

There must be a candle here, and some flowers there.—The horrid man!—Nonsense, nonsense; there is nothing wrong in it. . . . The Christmas-tree shall be beautiful. I will do everything that gives you pleasure, Torvald; I will sing, and dance, and . . .

SCENE XIII.

NORA. HELMER (*from out of doors, with a bundle of documents under his arm*).

NORA.

Oh! are you back already?

HELMER.

Yes. Has anybody been here?

NORA.

Here? No.

HELMER.

Curious! I saw Krogstad come out of the house.

NORA.

Did you? Oh, yes, it is true he was here for a minute.

HELMER.

Nora, I can see from your manner he has been here, and asked you to put in a good word for him.

NORA.

Yes.

HELMER.

And you were to do it as of your own accord? You were to say nothing to me of his having been here?

NORA.

Yes, Torvald; but—

HELMER.

Nora, Nora! and you could bring yourself to do that? to allow yourself to be drawn into talk with such a man, and give him a promise. And then tell me an untruth about it?

NORA.

An untruth?

HELMER.

Didn't you say nobody had been here? (*Threatens with his finger.*) My lark must never do that again. A little singing bird must never sing false notes (*puts his arm round her*). That's true, isn't it? Yes, I knew it (*lets her go*). And now we'll say no more about it (*sits down before the fire*). Oh, how comfortable and quiet it is here (*glances into his documents*).

NORA (*busy with the tree, after a short silence*).

Torvald.

HELMER.

Yes.

NORA.

I am so excessively delighted over the Steinbergs costume ball the day after to-morrow.

HELMER.

And I am so excessively curious to see what you will surprise me with.

NORA.

Oh! that's the tiresome part of it.

HELMER.

How do you mean?

NORA.

I can't find anything to suit me. Everything seems so silly and meaningless.

HELMER.

Has my little Nora arrived at *that* opinion?

NORA (*behind his chair, with her arms on the back*).

Are you very busy, Torvald.

HELMER.

Eh?

NORA.

What sort of papers are those?

HELMER.

Papers concerning the Bank.

NORA.

Already?

HELMER.

I got the retiring authorities to give me full power beforehand to make the necessary changes in the staff and method of working. This is what I must spend my Christmas week in arranging. By New Year's Day I will have everything in order.

NORA.

Then this is why that poor Krogstad . . .

HELMER.

H—m. . . .

NORA (*leaning further over the chair, strokes his hair*).

If your work were not so pressing I should ask you a great, great favour, Torvald.

HELMER.

Let's hear it. What can it be?

NORA.

Nobody has such refined taste as you have. Now I should so love to look well at the costume ball. Torvald, dear, couldn't you take me in hand and settle what character I am to appear in, and how my costume ought to be arranged?

HELMER.

Is that obstinate little head of yours puzzled at last, and looking about for somebody to save it from destruction?

NORA.

Yes, Torvald. Without you I am utterly helpless.

HELMER.

Well, well; I'll think it over; we will soon hit upon something together.

NORA.

Oh, how kind and good that is of you (*goes to the tree again; pause*). How pretty the red flowers look. But, by-the-bye, was the . . . thing which Krogstad got into trouble about years ago really so bad?

HELMER.

Forged a name, that's all. Have you any notion what that means?

NORA.

Mustn't he have done it from need?

HELMER.

Yes, or as so many others do it, from heedlessness. I am not so heartless as to judge anybody absolutely from such a transaction alone.

NORA.

No; that's just what I thought you would say, Torvald.

HELMER.

Many a man can lift himself up again morally if he openly recognises his offence and undergoes its punishment.

NORA.

Punishment?

HELMER.

But Krogstad didn't set about it in that way: he tried to work his way out of it by dodges and tricks, and by that very means he has morally ruined himself.

NORA.

Do you think that it . . . ?

HELMER.

Only just think how a man so conscious of guilt as that

must go about everywhere lying, and a hypocrite, and an actor; how he must wear a mask towards his neighbour, and even his wife and children, his own children. That's the worst, Nora?

NORA.

Why?

HELMER.

Because such a misty atmosphere of lying brings contagion into the whole family. Every breath the children draw contains some germ of evil.

NORA (*closer behind him*).

Are you quite sure?

HELMER.

As a lawyer, darling child, I have remarked that many a time. Nearly all men who go to ruin early have had untruthful mothers.

NORA.

Why should it be—mothers?

HELMER.

In most cases it comes from the mother; but the father naturally works in the same direction. Every lawyer has reason to know that. And Krogstad has actually been poisoning his own children for years past by lying and acting a part; that is precisely why I call him morally lost. (*Stretches out his hands to her.*) This is the reason why my dear little Nora must not plead on his behalf. Shake hands upon it. Come, come; what's that? Give me your hand. That's right. Then it's a bargain. I do assure you it would have been impossible to me to work with him. I feel bodily discomfort when I am in any proximity to such people.

NORA (*takes her hand away and stalks to the other side of the Christmas-tree*).

How warm it is here. And I have so much to do still.

HELMER (*rises and puts his papers together*).

Yes, I must take care to get some of these papers read through before dinner; and I will think over your costume too. And I should not be surprised if I were to get ready some trifle that might be hung in gilt paper on the Christmas-tree. (*Lays his hand upon her head.*) My dear

little lark. (*He goes into his room and shuts the door behind him.*)

SCENE XIV.

NORA. Then MARY ANN.

NORA (*slowly, after a pause*).

What was it? It can't be so . . . That is impossible. It must be impossible.

MARY ANN (*in the left door*).

The little ones are begging so prettily to come in to mamma.

NORA.

No, no; don't let them come in to me. Let them stay with you, Mary Ann.

MARY ANN.

Very well, ma'am (*shuts the door*).

NORA (*pale with terror*).

I ruin my children . . . poison my home. (*Short pause. She raises her head proudly.*) That is not true. It is never, and can never be, true.

ACT II.

THE SAME ROOM.

(*In the corner beside the piano stands the Christmas-tree, stripped, shabby, and with the candles burnt out. On the sofa Nora's walking things.*)

SCENE I.

NORA (*alone. She walks about restlessly. At last stands by the sofa and takes her cloak. After a minute's reflection she lets it fall again on to the sofa*).

There's somebody coming. (*Goes to the door, listens.*) No; nobody. Nobody is likely to come to-day, Christmas Day, nor to-morrow either. But perhaps . . . (*opens the door and peeps out*). No. Nothing in the letter-box; it's quite empty. (*Comes to the front of the stage.*) Stuff and nonsense! Of course he will do nothing serious in it.

Nothing of the kind can possibly happen. It is impossible. Why, I have three little children.

SCENE II.

(MARY ANN *coming out of the left room with a large paper card-board box.*)

MARY ANN.

At last I've found the box with the masquerade dress.

NORA.

Thanks ; put it down on the table there.

MARY ANN (*does so*).

But it is still very much out of order, ma'am.

NORA.

Oh, I wish I could tear it into a hundred thousand pieces.

MARY ANN.

Good gracious me, ma'am ! Why, it can be easily put to rights ; it only wants a little patience.

NORA.

Yes ; I will go to Mrs. Linden and get her to help me.

MARY ANN.

What ! out again, ma'am ? In this dreadful weather ? You'll catch your death of cold, ma'am, and be quite ill.

NORA.

Oh, that's not the worst thing that could happen. What are the children doing ?

MARY ANN.

They're playing with their Christmas presents, dear little things ; but . . .

NORA.

Do they often ask after me ?

MARY ANN.

Well, you see, ma'am, they have been so used to having their mamma always with them.

NORA.

Yes ; but, Mary Ann, henceforth I can't have them so much with me as hitherto.

MARY ANN.

Well, ma'am, little children get used to anything.

NORA.

Do you think they do? Do you believe that they would forget their mother if she went quite away?

MARY ANN.

Gracious me, ma'am; quite away!

NORA.

Tell me, Mary Ann—I've so often wondered about it—how could you bring yourself to give your child up to strangers?

MARY ANN.

But I was obliged to, if I wanted to come as nurse to my little Miss Nora, ma'am.

NORA.

Yes; but that you could want to.

MARY ANN.

When I could get such a good place, ma'am? A poor girl who's been in trouble could only be very glad to come; for that wicked man did nothing for me.

NORA.

But of course your daughter has forgotten you?

MARY ANN.

Oh no, ma'am, not in the least. She wrote to me both when she was confirmed and when she got married.

NORA (*embracing her*).

Dear Mary Ann, you were a good mother to me when I was a little girl.

MARY ANN.

My poor little Miss Nora had no mother but me.

NORA.

And if my little children had nobody else I am sure you would . . . Nonsense, nonsense (*opens the box*). Go to them in the nursery. Now I must . . . To-morrow you shall see how beautifully this dress suits me.

MARY ANN.

Yes, ma'am, I'm sure there will be nobody so beautiful

at the whole ball as my Miss Nora. (*She goes into the left room.*)

NORA (*begins taking the costume out of the box, then soon throws it down again.*)

Oh, if I could go away. If only nobody would come. If only nothing would happen here at home meanwhile. Rubbish! nobody will come. Only not to think . . . Stroke one's muff smooth. Beautiful gloves, beautiful gloves . . . Away with the whole thing, away with it . . . One, two, three, four, five, six. (*With a cry.*) Oh! there comes the . . . (*goes towards the door, but stands undecided.*)

SCENE III.

NORA. MRS. LINDEN (*comes from the hall, where she has taken off her things.*)

NORA.

Oh, it is you, Christina. Is nobody else there? How delightful of you to come.

MRS. LINDEN.

I hear you have called at my lodgings to ask for me.

NORA.

Yes, I was just passing. There is something I wanted you to help me with. Let us sit here on the sofa. Look here. To-morrow evening there is a costume ball at Consul Steinberg's overhead, and now Torvald wants me to appear as a Neapolitan fisher-girl, and dance the tarantella, because I *did* learn it in Capri.

MRS. LINDEN.

I see, dear. Then you are to give quite a representation of the character?

NORA.

Yes; Torvald wishes me to. Look! here is the costume. Torvald had it made for me in Italy; but now it is all so torn, and I hardly know . . .

MRS. LINDEN.

Oh! we'll soon set that to rights for you. It is only the trimming that has got loose here and there. Have

you a needle and thread? Ah! there's the very thing we want.

NORA.

How kind it is of you.

MRS. LINDEN (*sewing*).

If you're going to dress up to-morrow, Nora, I tell you what—I shall come in for a moment in order to see you in all your glory. But I have quite forgotten to thank you for the pleasant evening you gave me yesterday.

NORA (*looks up and walks across the room*).

Ah! yesterday it didn't seem to me so pleasant here as it generally is. . . . You should have come to town sooner, Christina. Yes, Torvald knows how to make our home beautiful and pleasant.

MRS. LINDEN.

And so do you, I think; or you would not be your father's daughter. But tell me—is Doctor Rank always so depressed as he was yesterday evening?

NORA.

It was particularly striking yesterday. He really has a terrible illness that accounts for it. He has spinal consumption, poor wretch. You see, his father was an awful man, who did all sorts of wrong things, and so of course his son has been ill from his childhood.

MRS. LINDEN (*lets her sewing fall into her lap*).

But, my dearest, loveliest Nora, how do you learn such things?

NORA (*walking*).

Oh! when one has three children one is sometimes called upon by . . . women who have a little medical knowledge, and happen to chat about one thing or another.

MRS. LINDEN (*goes on sewing; short pause*).

Does Doctor Rank come here every day?

NORA.

He never misses. He has been Torvald's friend from boyhood, you know, and is a good friend of mine too. Doctor Rank is quite one of the family.

MRS. LINDEN.

But just tell me, dear : is the man quite honest? I mean, doesn't he like saying flattering things to people?

NORA.

On the contrary. What makes you think so?

MRS. LINDEN.

When you introduced us yesterday he declared he had often heard my name in the house; but then I noticed your husband had no notion who I was. How, then, could Doctor Rank?

NORA.

You are right, Christina. But you see, dear Torvald loves me so indescribably much; and so he wants to have me all to himself, as he expresses it. When we first married he was almost jealous if I did but mention one of the people I lived with at home, so I naturally ceased to mention them. But I often talk to Doctor Rank about it, for he loves to hear me babble on.

MRS. LINDEN.

Dear Nora, in many things you are still just like a child. I am somewhat older than you are, and have a little more experience. I will tell you something: you ought to put an end to the whole affair with this Doctor.

NORA.

What affair?

MRS. LINDEN.

Both affairs, it seems to me. Yesterday you were telling me about a rich admirer who was to furnish you with money.

NORA.

Yes, and who never existed, more's the pity. But what then?

MRS. LINDEN.

Has Doctor Rank property?

NORA.

Yes, he has.

MRS. LINDEN.

And nobody to provide for?

NORA.

Nobody. But—

MRS. LINDEN.

And he comes here every day?

NORA.

Yes ; I tell you he never misses.

MRS. LINDEN.

But how can he, as a gentleman, be so intrusive?

NORA.

I really don't understand you.

MRS. LINDEN.

Don't pretend, Nora. Don't you suppose I did not guess from whom you borrowed the £300?

NORA.

Are you out of your senses? You think that? A friend of the family who comes here every day to us! What a terrible, torturing state of things it would be!

MRS. LINLEN.

Then it really is not he?

NORA.

No; that I do assure you. It never for a moment occurred to me to ask him. Besides, at that time he had nothing to lend; it was later that he came into his property.

MRS. LINDEN.

Well, that was certainly lucky for you, Nora dear.

NORA.

No, really, it never would have struck me to ask Doctor Rank. However, I am certain that if I did—

MRS. LINDEN.

But of course you never would . . .

NORA.

I should think not, indeed. Nor do I believe it will be necessary. But I am firmly convinced that if I said to Doctor Rank—

MRS. LINDEN.

Behind your husband's back?

NORA.

I must get out of the other loan ; that I had to manage behind his back too. I must get out of that.

MRS. LINDEN.

Yes, yes, you were saying so yesterday ; but—

NORA (*walking up and down*).

A man can get things into better order somehow than a woman can. . .

MRS. LINDEN.

Her own husband ; yes.

NORA.

Nonsense. (*Stands still.*) When one pays everything off that one owes, one gets back the acknowledgment of the debt?

MRS. LINDEN.

Of course.

NORA.

And can tear it into a hundred thousand pieces and burn the nasty, horrid thing!

MRS. LINDEN (*looks at her fixedly, lays down her work, and looks up slowly*).

Nora, you are hiding something from me.

NORA.

Can you see that in my manner?

MRS. LINDEN.

Since yesterday morning something has been happening to you. Nora, what is it?

NORA (*going towards her*).

Christina. (*Listens.*) Hush. There's Torvald coming home. Here, go and sit with the children. Torvald can't bear to see dress-making. Let Mary Ann help you.

MRS. LINDEN (*gathers some of the things together*).

Very well ; but I shan't go away until we have spoken openly to each other. (*She goes away to the left as Helmer enters from the Hall*).

SCENE IV.

NORA. HELMER.

NORA (*goes to meet him*).

Oh ! how I have been longing to see you, Torvald dear.

HELMER.

Was the dress-maker here ?

NORA.

No ; Christina. She is helping me to get my costume into order. You will see I shall look perfectly charming.

HELMER.

Yes ; wasn't that an extremely lucky thought of mine ?

NORA.

Glorious ! But is it not also very beautiful of me to give in to you ?

HELMER (*takes her under the chin*).

Beautiful of you—that you give in to your own husband ! Why, you little rogue, I know very well you didn't mean anything of the sort. But I won't disturb you. I dare say you want to be fitting on your dress.

NORA.

And I dare say you're going to work ?

HELMER.

Yes (*shows her a bundle of documents*). Look here. I was at the bank just now (*is about to go to his room*).

NORA.

Torvald.

HELMER (*stands still*).

Yes ?

NORA.

If your little squirrel were to ask you for something very prettily and seriously. . .

HELMER.

Then ?

NORA.

Would you do it ?

HELMER.

Naturally I should first expect to be told what it is.

NORA.

The little squirrel would jump about and perform all sorts of funny tricks if you would be amiable and do as you are asked.

HELMER.

Come, then ; out with it.

NORA.

The little lark would twitter round in all the rooms, loud and soft by turns. . .

HELMER.

Oh, there's nothing in that. She does all that as it is.

NORA.

I would act a fairy, and dance in the moonshine, Torvald.

HELMER.

Nora, you can't mean what you were begging me about this morning?

NORA (*coming nearer*).

Yes, Torvald, I do beg you so.

HELMER.

Have you really courage to mention the matter again to me?

NORA.

Yes, yes. You must grant my request. You must let Krogstad keep his place at the Bank.

HELMER.

My dear Nora, I have arranged for his place to be given to Mrs. Linden.

NORA.

Yes, and that was very nice of you. But instead of Krogstad, you could dismiss some other clerk.

HELMER.

That would be incredibly absurd. Because you heedlessly promised to put in a word for him, I am to . . .

NORA.

Not for that reason, Torvald. It is for your own sake. The man is on the staff of some of our most scurrilous newspapers; I have heard you say so myself. He can do you such infinite harm. I am so terribly afraid of him.

HELMER.

Oh, I understand; it is old recollections that are frightening you.

NORA.

Why do you say that?

HELMER.

Of course you are thinking of your father.

NORA.

Yes, to be sure. Only call to mind what wicked men used to write about father in the papers, and how shamefully they calumniated him. I believe they really would have got him dismissed if Government had not sent you down to look into the matter, and if you had not been so kindly and considerate towards him.

HELMER.

My dear Nora, between your father and me there is all the difference in the world. Your father was not, as an official, quite unimpeachable. But I am; and I hope to remain so as long as I am at my post.

NORA.

Oh, you don't in the least comprehend how wicked men find out all sorts of things to say. We could be so well off now, and live so quietly and happily in our peaceful home, free from any kind of care, you and I and the children, Torvald! This is why I beg you so earnestly.

HELMER.

And it is just by your throwing yourself into the matter that you make it impossible for me to keep him. It is already known at the Bank that I intend to dismiss Krogstad. If it were now to be known that the new Bank Manager let himself be talked round by his wife—

NORA.

Well, then?

HELMER.

If only the obstinate little woman can get her own way, of course that is all she wants. . . I am to make myself the laughing-stock of all the clerks, and set people saying I am under outside influence. Take my word for it, I should soon trace the consequences. And besides, there is one circumstance that makes Krogstad an impossible person to have at the Bank while I am manager there.

NORA.

What circumstance?

HELMER.

In case of necessity I could perhaps have overlooked his moral fault. . .

NORA.

Yes, couldn't you, Torvald?

HELMER.

And by what I hear he must be quite competent. But we knew each other in early youth. It is one of those hasty acquaintances that so often hamper one in later life. In fact, the whole difficulty lies in his calling me Torvald. And the tactless creature makes no secret of it when other people are present. On the contrary, he fancies it justifies his taking a familiar tone with me; and so he blurts out at every turn, 'I say, Torvald:' I do assure you it causes me most painful emotion. He would make my position at the Bank perfectly unendurable to me.

NORA.

Torvald, you are not serious in saying all this.

HELMER.

Not? Why not?

NORA.

All these are such petty considerations.

HELMER.

What are you saying? Petty consid— Do you consider me petty?

NORA.

No, on the contrary, Torvald dear; and that is just why—

HELMER.

It's all the same. You call my reasons petty; then I must be petty too. Petty! Very well then. Now we'll put an end to this once and for all. (*Goes to the door into the hall and calls.*) Ellen!

NORA.

What do you want to do!

HELMER (*searching among his papers*).

To put an end to the whole affair.

SCENE V.

THE PRECEDING. ELLEN.

HELMER (*to ELLEN*).

There, take the letter. Give it to a messenger. But see that he takes it at once. The address is on it. Here is the money for him.

SCENE VI.

NORA. HELMER.

HELMER (*putting his papers in order*).

There, my obstinate little wife.

NORA (*as though out of her mind*).

Torvald, what letter was that?

HELMER.

Krogstad's dismissal.

NORA.

Fetch it back again, Torvald. There is still time. Oh, Torvald, get it back again. Do it for my sake—for your own sake—for our children's sake. Do you hear? Torvald, do it. You don't know what that letter has the power to bring upon us all.

HELMER.

Too late.

NORA.

Yes, too late.

HELMER.

Dear Nora, I forgive you your anxiety, although it is

founded upon what is wounding to me. Yes, that is what it really is. Or perhaps it is no offence to me for you to believe I should be afraid of the revenge of a disgraced newspaper scribbler? But I forgive it you, because it is all the time a charming proof of your great love for me (*takes her in his arms*). It must be so, my dear, darling Nora. Let what will befall us. If I am called upon for it, I have not only courage, but the strength too, you know. You shall see I am powerful enough to take everything upon my shoulders.

NORA (*suddenly terrified*).

What do you mean by that?

HELMER.

Everything, I say.

NORA (*decidedly*).

That you shall never, never do.

HELMER.

Very well; then we will share it, Nora, as man and wife, just as we ought to do (*strokes her*). Are you satisfied now? Come, come, come; don't let me see those eyes looking like a scared dove's. It is all your own fancy. Now you must act the tarantella, and practise the tambourine. I shall go and sit in my other office and shut the double door, so that I shall hear nothing. You can make as much noise as ever you please (*turns round in the doorway*), and when Rank comes, just tell him where I am to be found.

SCENE VII.

NORA. *Then* RANK. *Later* EILEN.

NORA (*shaken with anxiety, stands as though rooted to the ground, and whispers*).

He had it in his power to do it. Yes; he did it. He did it in spite of all and everything I said. No; never that, to all Eternity. Rather anything than that! Save me! Oh, for some way out of it. (*The hall-door bell rings.*) Doctor Rank! Rather anything than that, whatever it may be. (*She drags herself slowly along, with her hand over her face, goes to the door and opens it. Rank stands*

outside and hangs up his great coat. During the following scene it grows dark.) Good afternoon, Doctor Rank. I knew you by your ring. But you must not go to Torvald now; for I believe he has some work to do.

RANK.

And you?

NORA (*as he walks into the room, and she shuts the door behind him*).

Oh, you know perfectly well I have always a spare moment for you.

RANK.

Thank you. I shall avail myself of your kindness as long as ever I can.

NORA.

What does that mean? As long as ever you can?

RANK.

Yes; does that frighten you?

NORA.

You express yourself so curiously. Does it mean you have got to know something?

RANK.

Something about which I have long been convinced; but I did not think it would come off quite so soon.

NORA (*seizing his arm*).

What is it you have got to know? Doctor Rank, you must tell me.

RANK (*sitting down by the stove*).

I am running downhill. There is no help for it.

NORA (*breathing with relief*).

You are the one, then, who . . . ?

RANK.

Who else should it be? Why deceive oneself? I am the most miserable of all my patients, Mrs. Helmer. In the last few days I have had a general stock-taking of my inner man. Bankruptcy! Before a month is over I shall be food for worms in the churchyard.

NORA.

Oh, what ugly things you say!

RANK.

The thing itself is so cursed ugly. But the worst of it is, that so many other ugly things have to be gone through first. There is only one investigation to be made, and when I have made it I shall know exactly at what time dissolution will begin. There is something I want to say to you about that. Helmer has stamped on his refined nature such a hatred for all that is ugly; I will not have him in my sick room.

NORA.

But, Doctor Rank—

RANK.

I will not have him in my sick room—upon any condition whatsoever. I close my door against him. As soon as I obtain completely certain information as to the worst, I shall send you my visiting card with a black cross on it, and then you will know that the horrors of dissolution have begun.

NORA.

Come, this is too bad of you. The things you are saying, too, are too disagreeable for anything. And I was so particularly anxious you should be in a really good temper.

RANK.

With Death staring me in the face? And all by way of penance for the faults of other people. What justice is there in that? Just such compensation is being exacted, inexorably, after one fashion or another, in every family.

NORA (*stopping her ears*).

Nonsense. Do be funny, funny!

RANK.

Yes, really, the whole story is only worth laughing at. My poor innocent spine must do penance for my father's notions of amusement when he was a lieutenant in the army.

NORA (*at the left table*).

I suppose he was devoted to asparagus and Strasburg pies, wasn't he?

RANK.

Certainly, and to truffles.

NORA.

Yes, devoted to truffles, to be sure, and to oysters, I believe.

RANK.

Yes, to oysters; no need to mention that; oysters, of course.

NORA.

And then all the port wine and champagne. It is sad that all these dainties should affect the bones so disastrously.

RANK.

Especially when the bones so disastrously affected never got the least advantage from the dainties.

NORA.

Yes; that is the saddest part of it.

RANK (*looks at her searchingly*).

H—m. . . .

NORA (*a moment later*).

Why were you smiling?

RANK.

No; it was you who smiled.

NORA.

No, you, Doctor Rank.

RANK (*standing up*).

You are really a greater rogue than I thought.

NORA.

To-day I am just inclined to play all sorts of tricks.

RANK.

It seems like it.

NORA (*with her hands on his shoulders*).

Dear, good Doctor Rank, Death shall not take you away from Torvald and me.

RANK.

Oh, you will easily get over the loss. People who go away are soon forgotten.

NORA (*looking at him anxiously*).

Do you think so?

RANK.

People make fresh ties, and then—

NORA.

Who will make fresh ties?

RANK.

You and Helmer, as soon as I am gone. In fact, *you* are already setting about it, it seems to me. What was this Mrs. Linden doing here yesterday?

NORA.

Oh, that's it? But you don't mean to say you're jealous of poor Christina?

RANK.

Yes, I am. She will be my successor here in your house. This woman will probably—

NORA.

Hush! Not so loud; she is in there.

RANK.

To-day, as well? There, just what I said!

NORA.

Only to put my costume in order. But, really, what odious things you are saying (*sits on the sofa*). Now, do just be sensible, Doctor Rank; to-morrow you shall see how beautifully I dance, and then you may fancy, if you like, that I am doing it all to please you only, and of course Torvald as well—of course (*takes various things out of the cardboard box*). Doctor Rank, sit over here: I will show you something.

RANK (*sitting down*).

What is it?

NORA.

Look here. Do you see these?

Silk stockings.

RANK.

NORA.

Flesh-coloured. Aren't they lovely? Oh, it's so dark here now; but to-morrow. . . . No, no, no, you must only look at the feet. Very well, I give you leave to look at the rest too.

RANK.

H—m.

NORA.

What are you looking so critical about? Don't you think they would fit me?

RANK.

It is impossible I should have any settled opinion on that point.

NORA (*looking at him a moment*).

For shame (*hits him lightly on the ear with the stockings*). Take that for it (*puts them in the box again*).

RANK.

And what other splendid things have you got there that I was to see?

NORA.

You won't be allowed to see anything more, for you don't behave nicely. (*She hums a little and searches among the things.*)

RANK (*after a short silence*).

When I am sitting here in such perfect intimacy with you, I simply can't imagine what would have become of me if I had never entered this house.

NORA (*smiling*).

Yes, I really think you like being with us.

RANK (*more softly, looking straight before him*).

And now I must go away from it all.

NORA.

Nonsense. You won't go away from us.

RANK (*in the same tone*).

And not be able to leave behind me the smallest sign

of thanks; scarcely a passing thought of regret—nothing but an empty place that can be filled by the next comer as well as by anybody else.

NORA.

And if I were to ask you now for . . . No.

RANK.

For what?

NORA.

For a great proof of your friendship.

RANK.

Well, well?

NORA.

No, I mean—for a very, very great service.

RANK.

Would you really for once make me so happy as that would make me?

NORA.

Oh, you have no notion yet what it is.

RANK.

Very well; please tell me directly.

NORA.

But I can't: it is such an extraordinarily great thing. Not only a service, but advice and help besides.

RANK.

So much the better. I can't imagine what you can mean. But do go on. Don't you trust me?

NORA.

Yes, as I trust nobody else. You are my best and most faithful friend. I know that. For that reason I will tell you what it is. Well, then, Doctor Rank, you must help me to hinder something. You know how deeply, how indescribably Torvald loves me; he would not hesitate a moment to give his very life for mine.

RANK (*bending towards her*).

Nora, do you think, then, that he is the only one who would—

NORA (*with slight hesitation*).

Who?

RANK.

Who would gladly give his life for you?

NORA (*sadly*).

Oh!

RANK.

I had sworn that you should know it before I went away for ever. I should never find a better opportunity. Yes, Nora, now you know it. And now you know, too, that you can trust yourself to me as you could to no one else.

NORA (*stands up simply and calmly*).

Let me pass, please.

RANK (*makes way for her, but sits still*).

Nora.

NORA (*in the door to the hall*).

Ellen, bring the lamp. (*Walks to the stove.*) Oh, dear Doctor Rank, that was too bad of you.

RANK (*standing up*).

That I love you devotedly as no one else does? Was that too bad of me?

NORA.

No; but that you should tell me so. It was really not necessary.

RANK.

What do you mean? Did you know it, then?

ELLEN (*comes in with the lamp, sets it down on the table, and goes out again*).

RANK.

Nora, Mrs. Helmer, I ask you, did you know anything of it?

NORA.

Oh, what do I know as to whether I knew or didn't know? I really can't say. . . But that you could possibly be so clumsy. Everything was going on so beautifully.

RANK.

Well, at any rate you know now for certain that I am quite at your disposal, soul and body. And now speak on.

NORA (*looking at him*).

Speak on now?

RANK.

I beg you to tell me what it is you want.

NORA.

Now I can't say anything more to you.

RANK.

Oh dear, dear! you must not punish me in that way. Give me leave to do for you whatever is in a man's power.

NORA.

You cannot do anything more for me now. And besides, I want no help from any stranger. You shall see it was all my imagination. Yes, mere imagination on my part. Of course. (*Sits in the rocking-chair, looks at him, smiles.*) Yes, you really are a charming gentleman, Doctor Rank. Now just tell me, aren't you ashamed of yourself now that the lamp is on the table?

RANK.

No, indeed I am not. But perhaps I ought to go, and for ever?

NORA.

No; you needn't do that. You are to come to us as you always have come. You know very well that Torvald can't do without you.

RANK.

Yes; but you?

NORA.

Oh, it always gives me the greatest pleasure to have you with us.

RANK.

That is just what led me to mistake my path. You are a riddle to me. It often seemed to me as though you would almost as gladly spend your time with me as with Helmer.

NORA.

Yes,—don't you see? one loves one person, and likes spending time with another.

RANK.

Ah, there's some truth in that.

NORA.

When I was still a girl at home, I naturally loved papa beyond all else. But it always delighted me when I could steal into the maids' room; for, in the first place, they never lectured me, and in the second, it was always so merry there.

RANK.

Oh, I see; then it is *their* place I have taken.

NORA (*jumps up and hurries towards him*).

Oh! dear, good Doctor Rank, I never meant that. But you can very well imagine that I feel about Torvald just as I used to feel about father.

ELLEN (*coming from the hall*).

Please, ma'am. (*Whispers in her ear and gives her a card.*)

NORA (*glances at the card*).

Ah! (*Puts it in her pocket.*)

RANK.

Something disagreeable up?

NORA.

No, not in the least. It is only—it is my new costume.

RANK.

How can it be? It's there.

NORA.

Oh, that one, yes; but it's another, that . . . I ordered it . . . Torvald is not to know.

RANK.

Oh, indeed. So that's the great secret.

NORA.

Yes, to be sure. Do just go into his room; he is in the one beyond that one; do keep him as long as you can.

RANK.

Make yourself easy; he sha'n't get away from me (*goes into HELMER'S room*).

NORA (*to ELLEN*).

Then he is waiting in the kitchen?

ELLEN.

Yes; he came to the back door.

NORA.

But did you not tell him I had a visitor with me?

ELLEN.

Yes, ma'am; but it was no use.

NORA.

He really will not go away, then?

ELLEN.

No, ma'am; not until he has spoken with you.

NORA.

Then let him come in, but quietly. And say nothing about it, Ellen; it is a surprise for my husband.

ELLEN.

Oh yes, ma'am; I quite understand (*goes*).

NORA.

The terrible thing is coming. It is here already. No, no, no; it can never happen; it shall not. (*She goes to HELMER'S door and slips the bolt. ELLEN opens the hall door to KROGSTAD, and shuts it behind him. He wears a travelling coat, high boots, and a fur cap.*)

SCENE VIII.

NORA. KROGSTAD.

NORA (*towards him.*)

Speak quietly. My husband is at home.

KROGSTAD.

All right ; I don't care.

NORA.

What do you want of me ?

KROGSTAD.

An explanation of something.

NORA.

Be quick, then. What is it ?

KROGSTAD.

You know I have received my dismissal.

NORA.

I could not prevent it, Mr. Krogstad. I fought to the last on your behalf, but without success.

KROGSTAD.

Does your husband love you so little ? He knows what it is that I can do to injure you, and yet he dares—

NORA.

How could you think I should tell him ?

KROGSTAD.

Goodness me ! I didn't think that, either. To show so much manly courage did not look much like my fine Torvald Helmer.

NORA.

Mr. Krogstad, I demand respect for my husband.

KROGSTAD.

To be sure ; all due respect. But since you, dear madam, are so anxious to keep the matter secret, I suppose I may venture to assume that you are a little clearer than you were yesterday as to what you have really done ?

NORA.

Clearer than *you* could ever make me.

KROGSTAD.

Yes, such a bad lawyer as I am.

NORA.

What is it you want?

KROGSTAD.

Only to see how you were getting on, Mrs. Helmer. I have been thinking about you all day long. A cashier, a disgraced newspaper writer, a—in short, a creature like me, you know, has a little bit of what people call 'heart.'

NORA.

Then show it; think of my little children.

KROGSTAD.

Did you and your husband think of mine? But let's leave that alone. I only wanted to tell you that you needn't take this matter too seriously. I sha'n't be the first one to talk about it.

NORA.

No; to be sure. I knew you wouldn't be.

KROGSTAD.

It can be settled as amiably as possible. Nobody need know. It can remain among us three.

NORA.

My husband is never to know anything about it.

KROGSTAD.

How can you prevent that? Can you pay off the debt, eh?

NORA.

No, not at once.

KROGSTAD.

Or have you any means of raising the money in the next few days?

NORA.

No means that I will make use of.

KROGSTAD.

And if you had, it would be no good to you now. If you stood here with ever so much money in your hand you wouldn't get your I. O. U. back from me.

NORA.

Tell me what you want to do with it.

KROGSTAD.

I only want to keep it, to have it in my own hands. No stranger shall hear anything of it. If you were to form any desperate resolution. . .

NORA.

That I shall do.

KROGSTAD.

If you should think of leaving your husband and children. . .

NORA.

That I shall do.

KROGSTAD.

Or if you should think of doing something far worse . . .

NORA.

How do you know that?

KROGSTAD.

Never mind that.

NORA.

How do you know I had that in my mind?

KROGSTAD.

Most of us think of *that* as the first thing to do. I had thought of it too; but really had not the courage.

NORA (*voicelessly*).

Nor I.

KROGSTAD (*relieved*).

No, one hasn't. You had not the courage either, had you?

NORA.

I hadn't, I hadn't.

KROGSTAD.

Besides, it would be very silly. When the first storm is only over in the house . . . I have a letter in my pocket for your husband.

NORA.

Telling him everything?

KROGSTAD.

Sparing you as far as possible.

NORA (*quickly*).

He shall never have that letter. Tear it up. I will get you the money somehow.

KROGSTAD.

I beg your pardon, Mrs. Helmer; but I believe I have already told you . . .

NORA.

Oh, I'm not talking about the money I owe you. Tell me how large a sum you demand from my husband, and I will get it for you.

KROGSTAD.

I demand no money from your husband.

NORA.

What *do* you want, then?

KROGSTAD.

I will tell you. I want to get on in the world, dear madam; I want to redeem my position in it. And your husband shall help me to do it. For the last eighteen months I have not been concerned in any dishonourable transaction; during that time I have been fighting against the most gloomy circumstances. I was content to work my way up, step by step. Now I am turned out, and I am not satisfied to get employment again as a matter of favour. I mean to rise in the world, I tell you. . . I will get into the Bank again—and in a higher position than before. Your husband shall make a place on purpose for me.

NORA.

He will never do that.

KROGSTAD.

He will do it. I know him ; he won't dare to refuse. And when I am once associated with him there you will soon see ! Before a year is out I shall be the manager's right hand. It won't be Torvald Helmer but Nils Krogstad who carries on the Joint Stock Bank.

NORA.

You'll never get to that point.

KROGSTAD.

Perhaps you would . . .

NORA.

Yes ; now I have the courage for it.

KROGSTAD.

Oh, you don't frighten me. An elegant, spoilt lady like you . . .

NORA.

You will see, you will see.

KROGSTAD.

Under the ice, perhaps. Down into the black cold water. And then next spring be fished up on the shore, ugly, unrecognisable, with your hair all fallen out . . .

NORA.

You don't frighten me.

KROGSTAD.

Nor you me. People don't do things of that sort, Mrs. Helmer. And, after all, what would be the use of it ? I have your husband so completely here in my pocket.

NORA.

Even then still ? When I am no longer—

KROGSTAD.

Do you forget that your good name after death is in my hands ?

(NORA stands speechless and looks at him.)

KROGSTAD.

Well, now you are prepared. Do nothing foolish. So

soon as Helmer has received my letter I shall expect to hear from him. And bear in mind that it is your husband himself who has forced me back again into such paths. That I will never forgive him. Good-bye, Mrs. Helmer (*goes through the hall*).

SCENE IX.

NORA. *Then* MRS. LINDEN.

NORA (*hurries to the door, opens it a little, and listens*).

He is going. He is not putting the letter in the box. No, no, it would be quite impossible. (*Opens the door further and further.*) What does that mean? He is standing still, not going down the stairs. Is he thinking better of it? Would he? (*A letter falls into the box; KROGSTAD'S steps are then heard until lost in the distance down the stairs.*)

NORA (*with a suppressed cry rushes through the room to the sofa-table; short pause*).

In the letter-box (*goes quietly and timidly to the door*). There it lies. Torvald, Torvald, now we are lost.

MRS. LINDEN (*with the costume from the left room*).

Yes, now I have got it into nice order again. Should we just try it on?

NORA (*hoarsely and softly*).

Christina, do come here.

MRS. LINDEN (*throws the dress on the sofa*).

What's the matter? You look so disturbed.

NORA.

Do come here. Do you see the letter? There, see, through the wire-work of the letter-box.

MRS. LINDEN.

Yes, yes; I see it.

NORA.

That letter is from Krogstad.

MRS. LINDEN.

Nora, it was Krogstad who lent you the money.

NORA.

Yes; and now Torvald will know all about it.

MRS. LINDEN.

Believe me, Nora, it is the best thing for you both.

NORA.

You don't know all yet. I have forged a name.

MRS. LINDEN.

Good heavens!

NORA.

I only wanted to tell you that, Christina; you shall be my witness.

MRS. LINDEN.

How 'witness'? What am I to—?

NORA.

If I lose my mind, and that might easily happen.

MRS. LINDEN.

Nora!

NORA.

Or if any other blow should strike me—anything such as my not being here present.

MRS. LINDEN.

Nora, Nora, you don't know what you're saying.

NORA.

In case there were to be anybody who wanted to take the . . . the whole blame, I mean . . .

MRS. LINDEN.

Yes, yes; but how can you think . . .

NORA.

Then you will be able to bear witness that it is not true, Christina. I know very well what I am saying. I am in full possession of my senses; and I say to you: Nobody else knew anything about it; I alone have done everything. Don't forget that.

MRS. LINDEN.

I won't forget it. But I haven't the remotest notion what it all means.

NORA.

Oh, how should you? But a miracle will come to pass even yet.

MRS. LINDEN.

A miracle?

NORA.

Yes, a miracle; but it is so terrible, Christina. It must not happen for anything in the world.

MRS. LINDEN.

I will go to Krogstad at once and talk to him.

NORA.

Don't go to him. He will do you some injury.

MRS. LINDEN.

There was a time when for love of me he would have done anything.

NORA.

He?

MRS. LINDEN.

Where does he live?

NORA.

Oh, how can I tell? Yes (*feels in her pocket*); here I have a card of his. But the letter, the letter.

SCENE X.

THE PRECEDING. HELMER *outside*.

HELMER (*in his room knocks at the door*).

Nora!

NORA (*cries out anxiously*).

Yes; what is it? What do you want with me?

HELMER.

Well, well, don't be so frightened. We aren't coming in; you have bolted the door, you know. You are trying your dress on, I dare say.

NORA.

Yes, yes; I'm trying it on. It suits me so well, Torvald.

MRS. LINDEN (*who has read the card*).
Then he lives close by here, at the corner?

NORA.

Yes; but it's no use now. We are lost. The letter is actually in the box.

MRS. LINDEN.

And your husband has the key?

NORA.

Always.

MRS. LINDEN.

Krogstad must ask to have his letter back unread. He must make some excuse—

NORA.

But this is the very time when Torvald generally—

MRS. LINDEN.

Prevent him; go and stay with him all the time. I will come back as quickly as I can. (*She goes quickly away through the entrance door.*)

NORA (*goes to HELMER'S door, opens it, and peeps in*).
Torvald.

SCENE XI.

NORA. HELMER. Then RANK. Later MRS.
LINDEN and ELLEN.

HELMER (*in the back-room*).

Well, now may one come back into one's own room? Come, Rank, now we'll just have a look (*in the door*). But what is that?

NORA.

What is what, Torvald dear?

HELMER.

Rank led me to expect a grand dress-transformation scene.

RANK (*in the door*).

So I understood; I was mistaken too.

NORA.

No; before to-morrow evening you will neither of you get any opportunity of admiring me.

HELMER.

But, dear Nora, you look so tired. Have you been practising too hard?

NORA.

No, I haven't practised at all yet.

HELMER.

But you really must.

NORA.

Yes, it is quite indispensable, Torvald. But without your help it won't go on well; I have forgotten everything.

HELMER.

Oh, we'll soon freshen it all up again.

NORA.

Yes, do help me, Torvald. You promised me you would, didn't you? Oh! I am so anxious about it. Before such a large party . . . this evening you must devote to me exclusively. No work allowed, no pen touched! Say 'yes.' Am I not right, Torvald?

HELMER.

I promise you: all this evening I will be at your entire disposal. You little helpless thing—hm, it is true; but I will first— (*Goes toward the hall door.*)

NORA.

What do you want outside there?

HELMER.

Only to see if any letters have come.

NORA.

No, no, don't do that, Torvald.

HELMER.

But why not?

NORA.

Torvald, I beg you not to; there are none there.

HELMER.

Let me just see (*will go*).

(NORA, at the piano, plays the first bars of the tarantella.)

HELMER (*standing still in the door*).

Ah!

NORA.

I can't dance to-morrow if I don't practise with you first.

HELMER (*going to her*).

Are you really so afraid, dear Nora?

NORA.

Yes, so dreadfully afraid. Let me practise at once; we have a little time left before dinner. Oh! sit down here and accompany me, Torvald dear; correct and teach me if I . . .

HELMER.

With all the pleasure in life, since you wish it. (*He sits down to the piano.*)

NORA (*takes the tambourine, and a long gay shawl from the box; drapes herself with the shawl very rapidly; then with a bound comes to the front of the stage.*)

Now you play and I will dance. (HELMER *plays*, NORA *dances*; RANK *stands at the piano behind HELMER and watches.*)

HELMER (*playing*).

Slower, slower!

NORA.

I can't do it differently.

HELMER.

Not so violently, Nora.

NORA.

That is just its style.

HELMER (*stops*).

No, no; it isn't right.

NORA (*laughs and swings the tambourine*).

Didn't I tell you so?

RANK.

I will accompany you a little.

HELMER (*rising*).

Yes; do so; then I can correct her better. (RANK *sits down to the piano and plays*. NORA *dances more and more wildly*. HELMER *stands by the fire and addresses frequent remarks in correction during the dance*. She seems not to

hear them. Her hair gets loose and falls on her shoulders ; she does not heed it, but goes on dancing. MRS. LINDEN enters.)

MRS. LINDEN (*stands as though spell-bound in the doorway*).

Oh !

NORA (*dancing*).

It is merry enough here, Christina.

HELMER.

But, dearest Nora, you are dancing as if it were a matter of life and death.

NORA.

And so it is.

HELMER.

Rank, just stop ; this is the merest madness. . . Stop, I say. (*RANK stops playing, and NORA comes to a sudden standstill.*)

HELMER (*going towards her*).

I should never have believed it. You have positively forgotten the whole thing.

NORA (*throws the tambourine away*).

You see for yourself.

HELMER.

You really do want teaching.

NORA.

Yes ; now you see how needful it is. You must practise with me up to the last moment. Will you, Torvald ?

HELMER.

Certainly, certainly.

NORA.

Neither to-day nor to-morrow must you think about anything but me ; you must not open a single letter, not so much as the letter-box.

HELMER.

Oh, you are still afraid of that man.

NORA.

Yes, I am.

HELMER.

Nora, I can see it in your manner. There is a letter from him in the box now.

NORA.

I don't know ; I believe so. But you are not to read anything of that sort—nothing of a worrying kind must come between us until everything is over.

RANK (*softly to HELMER*).

You mustn't contradict her.

HELMER (*putting his arm round her*).

The child shall have her own way. But to-morrow night, when you have danced—

NORA.

Then you will be free.

ELLEN (*in the left door*).

Dinner is ready, ma'am.

NORA.

We will have some champagne, Ellen.

ELLEN.

Yes, ma'am (*goes*).

HELMER.

Dear, dear, quite a banquet !

NORA.

Yes, a champagne banquet until morning dawns. (*Calls out.*) And maccaroons, Ellen—plenty—a great many—just this once.

HELMER (*taking her hands*).

Come, come, not this awful wildness. Be my gentle little lark once more.

NORA.

Oh, yes, I will. But now go into the dining-room ; and you too, Doctor Rank. Christina, you must help me to do my hair.

RANK (*softly as they go*).

There is nothing in the wind ? Nothing . . I mean . . .

HELMER.

Nothing whatever, my dear Rank. It is merely this babyish anxiety I was telling you about. (*Both go to the right.*)

NORA.

Well?

MRS. LINDEN.

He is gone out of town.

NORA.

I saw it in your face.

MRS. LINDEN.

He only returns to-morrow evening. I left a note for him there.

NORA.

You should not have done that. You ought not to hinder anything. After all, there is something glorious in expecting a miracle to happen.

MRS. LINDEN.

What do you expect, then?

NORA.

Oh, you can't understand. Go to them in the dining-room; I'll come in a moment. (MRS. LINDEN goes to the dining-room—right.)

SCENE XII.

NORA. *Then* HELMER.

NORA (*stands a while as though collecting her thoughts. Then looks at her watch.*)

Five—seven hours before midnight. Then twenty-four hours before the next midnight. Then the tarantella will be over. Twenty-four and seven. Still thirty-one hours to live.

HELMER (*in the right-hand door*).

But where is my little lark?

NORA (*runs with open arms towards him*).

Here she is.

ACT III.

THE SAME ROOM.

(The sofa-table is in the middle, together with the chairs surrounding it. A lamp lit is on the table. The door to the hall stands open. Dance-music is heard from overhead.)

SCENE I.

MRS. LINDEN *sits by the table and turns the pages of a book absently. She tries to read, but seems unable to fix her attention; she frequently listens and looks anxiously towards the hall door. Then enter KROGSTAD.*

MRS. LINDEN *(looking at her watch).*

Not here yet. And it is the latest time I mentioned. If he only doesn't . . . *(listens again).* Ch, there he is! *(She goes into the hall and opens the corridor-door carefully; a light tread is heard on the steps. She whispers.)* Come in. Nobody is here.

KROGSTAD *(in the door-way).*

I found a note from you at my house. What does that mean?

MRS. LINDEN.

It is absolutely necessary I should speak with you.

KROGSTAD.

Indeed? And was it absolutely necessary the interview should take place here?

MRS. LINDEN.

It was impossible at my lodgings. I have no sitting-room to myself. Come in; we are quite alone. The servants are asleep, and the Helmers are at the ball next door.

KROGSTAD *(coming into the room).*

Ah! what? The Helmers are dancing this evening? Really?

MRS. LINDEN.

Yes. Why not?

KROGSTAD.

Quite right. Why not?

MRS. LINDEN.

And now, Mr. Krogstad, let us talk a little.

KROGSTAD.

Have we anything left to say to each other?

MRS. LINDEN.

We have a great deal to say.

KROGSTAD.

I should not have thought so.

MRS. LINDEN.

Because you have never really understood me.

KROGSTAD.

Was there anything more to understand than what was clear as daylight? A heartless woman jilts a man when a better match offers itself.

MRS. LINDEN.

Do you consider me so utterly heartless? Do you think I should have broken it off with a light heart?

KROGSTAD.

Didn't you?

MRS. LINDEN.

Did you really think that of me, Nils?

KROGSTAD.

Then why did you write me such a letter as you wrote at the time?

MRS. LINDEN.

I really could not do otherwise. Since I had to break with you, it surely was also my duty to destroy in your heart everything you felt for me.

KROGSTAD (*squeezing his hands together*).

So that was it. And all—all for the sake of money only.

MRS. LINDEN.

You ought not to forget that I had a helpless mother

and two little brothers. We could not wait for you, Nils ; at that time you had but poor prospects.

KROGSTAD.

Very likely ; but you had no right to turn me off for the sake of any other man.

MRS. LINDEN.

Oh, I don't know. I have asked myself often enough since whether I had the right to do it.

KROGSTAD (*more gently*).

When I had lost you, it seemed to me as though the very ground had sunk away from under my feet. Just look at me : I am a ship-wrecked man on a raft now.

MRS. LINDEN.

I should think some help was close at hand.

KROGSTAD.

It *was* at hand ; but then you came and stood in my way.

MRS. LINDEN.

Without knowing it, Nils. It was only this morning I learnt that it was your post I had got.

KROGSTAD.

I believe you, since you say so. But now you do know it, do you mean to give it up?

MRS. LINDEN.

No ; for that would not help you in the least.

KROGSTAD.

Oh, 'help,' 'help.' I should do it whether or no.

MRS. LINDEN.

Life and hard, bitter necessity have taught me to act prudently.

KROGSTAD.

And life has taught me not to trust fine speeches.

MRS. LINDEN.

Then life has taught you a very sensible thing. But I suppose you do trust deeds?

KROGSTAD.

What do you mean by that?

MRS. LINDEN.

You said you were a shipwrecked man on a raft.

KROGSTAD.

I have good reason to say so.

MRS. LINDEN.

I too have suffered shipwreck, and am on a raft.

KROGSTAD.

You made your own choice.

MRS. LINDEN.

I had no choice at the time.

KROGSTAD.

Well, what more?

MRS. LINDEN.

Nils, how would it be if we two shipwrecked people could belong to each other?

KROGSTAD.

What are you saying?

MRS. LINDEN.

Two people have better chance of being saved on a raft than if each stays on his own.

KROGSTAD.

Christina!

MRS. LINDEN.

Why do you think I came here, to town?

KROGSTAD.

Was it with some thought of me?

MRS. LINDEN.

I must work in order to endure life. I have worked from my youth up, and work has been my one best friend. But now I am quite alone in the world—so terribly empty and forsaken. There is no happiness in working for oneself. Nils, give me somebody and something to work for.

KROGSTAD.

I don't believe a word of it. It is nothing but a woman's exaggerated notion of self-sacrifice.

MRS. LINDEN.

Have you ever noticed any exaggeration in me?

KROGSTAD.

What! You really could? Tell me, do you know my past?

MRS. LINDEN.

Yes.

KROGSTAD.

And do you know my reputation?

MRS. LINDEN.

Did you not hint it just now, when you said that with me you could have been another man?

KROGSTAD.

I am perfectly certain of it.

MRS. LINDEN.

Could it not yet be so?

KROGSTAD.

Christina, do you say this after full deliberation? Yes, you do. I see it in your face. Then you really have the courage?

MRS. LINDEN.

I need somebody to mother, and your children need a mother. We two are necessary to each other. Nils, I believe in the nobler part of your nature. With you I dare attempt anything!

KROGSTAD (*seizing her hands*).

Thank you, thank you, Christina. Now I shall know how to set about raising myself in the eyes of others. Oh, but I forgot . . .

MRS. LINDEN (*listens*).

Hush! the tarantella! Go, go.

KROGSTAD.

Why, what is it?

MRS. LINDEN.

Don't you hear the dancing overhead? When that is over they will come back.

KROGSTAD.

All right; I'll go. But it's too late now. Of course

you don't know what it is I have set going against the Helmers?

MRS. LINDEN.

Yes, Nils, I know.

KROGSTAD.

And nevertheless you have the courage to—

MRS. LINDEN.

I can very well comprehend to what lengths despair may drive a man like you.

KROGSTAD.

Oh, if I could but undo my share in it!

MRS. LINDEN.

You can, for your letter lies there in the box.

KROGSTAD.

Does it really?

MRS. LINDEN.

Yes; but . . .

KROGSTAD (*looking at her searchingly*).

Is that the explanation of it? You wanted to save your friend at any price. Say it straight out. Is that the way the land lies?

MRS. LINDEN.

Nils, a person who has once sold herself for the sake of others never does it again.

KROGSTAD.

I will ask to have my letter back again.

MRS. LINDEN.

No, no.

KROGSTAD.

Yes; I shall stop here till Helmer comes. I shall ask to have my letter back; I shall tell him it merely relates to my dismissal, and that he had better not read it.

MRS. LINDEN.

No, Nils, you must not ask for the letter back.

KROGSTAD.

But tell me, wasn't that the very reason for your bidding me come here?

MRS. LINDEN.

Yes, in my first moment of terror. But since then more than twenty-four hours have gone by, and during that time I have heard things in this house that are beyond belief. Helmer must know everything; between those two there must be the completest possible understanding, and that can never come to pass while all these excuses and concealments are going on.

KROGSTAD.

Very well, since you are so bold. But in any case, there is one thing I can do, and it shall be done at once.

MRS. LINDEN (*listens*).

Make haste; go, go. The dance is over; we are not safe another moment.

KROGSTAD.

I will wait for you in the street, in front here.

MRS. LINDEN.

Yes, do. You must take me home.

KROGSTAD.

Oh! I never was so happy in all my life before. (*Goes. The door between the room and the hall remains open during the following.*)

SCENE II.

MRS. LINDEN. *Then* HELMER and NORA.

MRS. LINDEN (*sets the furniture a little straight and puts her walking things together*).

What a change! what a happy change, to have somebody to work for, to live for! to bring loving order into a deserted home! Yes, that is what I will do. . . . If they came soon (*listens*). Ah, here they are! Where are my things? (*Takes bonnet and cloak. HELMER'S and NORA'S voices are heard; a key is turned in the lock, and HELMER drags NORA almost violently into the hall. She wears the Italian costume with a large black shawl over it. He is in evening dress, with an open black domino.*)

NORA (*still in the door, struggling with him*).

No, no, no; I won't go in; I want to go up-stairs again. I don't want to leave the ball so early. . .

HELMER.

But, dearest Nora—

NORA.

Oh, I do beg you so imploringly, so earnestly, Torvald—only one more hour.

HELMER.

Not another minute, Nora dear. You know we settled it should be this way. Come, go into the room; you are catching cold here. (*He leads her gently into the room in spite of her resistance.*)

MRS. LINDEN.

Good evening.

NORA.

Christina!

HELMER.

What, Mrs. Linden, you here so late?

MRS. LINDEN.

Yes, pardon me; I did so want to see Nora in her costume.

NORA.

Have you been sitting here waiting for me?

MRS. LINDEN.

Yes. Unfortunately I did not come early enough. You were already gone up-stairs, and then I did not wish to go away again without seeing you.

HELMER (*taking NORA's shawl off*).

Well, then, just look at her, but quietly. I think she is worth looking at. Is she not beautiful, Mrs. Linden?

MRS. LINDEN.

Yes, I must say—

HELMER.

Is she not wonderfully lovely? That was the general opinion at the ball. But she is dreadfully obstinate,—dear little creature! What is to be done with her? Will

you believe it, I had almost to use force to get her away from the ball?

NORA.

Oh, Torvald, you will be sorry you did not let me stop at least half an hour longer.

HELMER.

There! you hear her, Mrs. Linden? She dances her tarantella, wins wild applause,—which, however, was but due to her, although perhaps her rendering was a little too realistic; I mean . . . a little more than could be reconciled with the strict demands of art. But be that as it may, the chief thing was she got applauded, wildly applauded. Ought I to have let her stay any longer, and weaken the impression? Not if I know it. I took my charming Capri maiden, I might say my capricious maiden from Capri, under my arm; a rapid turn round the room; bows from all sides, and, as they say in novels—the lovely apparition was gone. A departure should always be effective, Mrs. Linden; but I can't get Nora to see it. . . . By Jove, it's warm here. (*Throws his domino on a chair and opens the door to his room.*) What? It's very dark here. Yes, of course; pardon me. (*He goes inside and lights two candles.*)

NORA (*whispers quickly and breathlessly*).

Well?

MRS. LINDEN (*softly*).

I have spoken to him.

NORA.

And—?

MRS. LINDEN.

Nora. . . You must tell your husband everything.

NORA.

I knew it.

MRS. LINDEN.

You have nothing to fear from Krogstad, but you must speak.

NORA.

I shall not speak.

MRS. LINDEN.

Then the letter will.

NORA.

Thank you, Christina. Now I know what I must do.
Hush!

HELMER (*coming back*).

Well, Mrs. Linden, have you admired her?

MRS. LINDEN.

Yes; and now I will say good night.

HELMER.

What, already? Does this knitting belong to you?

MRS. LINDEN (*taking it*).

Yes, thanks; I was nearly forgetting it.

HELMER.

Then you do knit?

MRS. LINDEN.

Yes.

HELMER.

Do you know, you ought to crochet instead?

MRS. LINDEN.

Indeed! Why?

HELMER.

Because it looks better. Look now. You hold the
crochet work in the left hand in this way, and then move
the needle about with the right hand—in and out—in an
easy, long-shaped bow, don't you?

MRS. LINDEN.

Yes, I dare say you do.

HELMER.

While in knitting, on the contrary, it always looks ugly:
Look now, your arms are bent tightly together, and the
needles go up and down; there is something Chinese in
it. . . Oh! that really was splendid champagne we had
at the ball.

MRS. LINDEN.

Now, good night, Nora, and don't be obstinate any more.

HELMER.

Well said, Mrs. Linden.

MRS. LINDEN.

Good night, Mr. Helmer.

HELMER (*going with her to the door*).

Good night, good night. I hope you'll get safely home. I would gladly . . . but it really is not far for you. Good night, good night. (*She goes. He shuts the door behind her and comes to the front of the stage again.*)

SCENE III.

HELMER. NORA.

HELMER.

There, now we've shut the door on her. She is an awful bore.

NORA.

Aren't you very tired, Torvald?

HELMER.

No, not in the least.

NORA.

Nor sleepy?

HELMER.

Not a bit. On the contrary, I feel most lively. But you? Yes, you look really tired and sleepy.

NORA.

Yes, I am very tired. I shall soon be asleep now.

HELMER.

There now, you see. I was right, after all, in not stopping longer with you at the ball.

NORA.

Oh, all is right that you do.

HELMER (*kisses her on the forehead*).

That is my dear little lark speaking like a human

being. Did you happen to notice, too, how merry Rank was this evening?

NORA.

Oh, was he really? I had no opportunity of speaking with him.

HELMER.

Nor had I, much ; but I have not seen him in such good spirits for a long time. (*Looks at her for a little while, then comes nearer to her.*) Hm . . . but it is quite too supremely delightful to be back in our own home, for me to be quite alone with you. Oh, you enchanting, glorious woman !

NORA.

Don't look at me in that way, Torvald.

HELMER.

I am not to look at my dearest treasure?—all the glory that is mine, mine only, wholly and altogether mine.

NORA (*goes to the other side of the table*).

You must not talk to me in that way this evening.

HELMER (*following her*).

I see, you have the tarantella still in your blood ; and that makes you more enchanting than ever. Listen : the other guests are beginning to go now. (*More softly.*) Nora, soon all the house will be still.

NORA.

I hope so.

HELMER.

Yes ; don't you, Nora darling? Oh, do you know, when I go into society with you in this way, do you know why I speak so little to you, and keep at such a distance from you, and only steal a glance at you now and then—do you know why I do it? Because I am fancying that you are one whom I love in secret, that I am secretly betrothed to you, and that nobody guesses there is any particular understanding between us.

NORA.

Yes, yes, yes ; I know very well that all your thoughts are with me.

HELMER.

And then, when we have to go home, and I put the shawl about your dear young shoulders, and this glorious throat of yours, I imagine you are my bride, and that we are coming straight from our wedding, and that I am bringing you for the first time to my home, and that I am alone with you for the first time, quite alone with you, you shy, beautiful thing. All this evening I was longing for you, and you only. When I watched you chasing and beckoning during the tarantella, it seemed to set my blood on fire; I could endure it no longer . . . and that's why I made you come home with me so early.

NORA.

Go now, Torvald; you must leave me alone. I don't want all that.

HELMER.

What can you mean? You must be joking with me, my pet. You don't want Am I not your husband? (*A knock.*)

NORA (*with a start*).

Do you hear?

HELMER (*at the hall door*).

Who is there?

SCENE IV.

THE PRECEDING. RANK.

RANK (*outside*).

It is I. May I come in for a moment?

HELMER (*in a low tone, annoyed*).

Oh, dear, what can he want at this time of night? (*Aloud.*) Wait a little. (*Goes and opens the door.*) Come, it is nice of you not to pass by our door.

RANK.

I thought I heard your voices, and that made me long just to look in. (*Glances rapidly round the room.*) Yes, here is the dear place I know so well. It is so quiet and comfortable here with you two.

HELMER.

You seemed to enjoy yourself exceedingly up-stairs too.

RANK.

Exceedingly. Why should I not? Why shouldn't one get enjoyment out of everything in this world? At any rate as much and as long as one can. The wine was splendid.

HELMER.

Especially the champagne.

RANK.

Did you notice it too? It was perfectly incredible the quantity I contrived to drink.

NORA.

Torvald drank a great deal of champagne this evening too.

RANK.

Did he?

NORA.

Yes; and after it he is always in such a good temper.

RANK.

Well, why should one not have a merry evening after a well-spent day?

HELMER.

Well-spent? As to that I have not much to boast of.

RANK (*tapping him on the shoulder*).

But I have, don't you see?

NORA.

Then you have certainly been engaged in some scientific investigation, Doctor Rank.

RANK.

Quite right.

HELMER.

Just see! Nora talks about scientific investigations.

NORA.

And am I to congratulate you on the result?

RANK.

By all means you must.

NORA.

Then the result was a good one.

RANK.

The best possible, alike for the physician and the patient—namely, certainty.

NORA (*quickly and searchingly*).

Certainty?

RANK.

Complete certainty. Ought not I, upon the strength of it, to be very merry this evening?

NORA.

Yes, you were quite right to be, Doctor Rank.

HELMER.

I say the same—provided you don't have to pay for it to-morrow.

RANK.

Well, in this life nothing is to be had for nothing.

NORA.

Doctor Rank, I am sure you are very fond of masquerade balls.

RANK.

When there are plenty of interesting masks present, I certainly am.

NORA.

Listen, and tell me what we two ought to appear as at our next masquerade.

[HELMER.

You giddy little thing, are you thinking already about your next ball?

RANK.

We two? I will tell you. You must go as the lucky fairy.

HELMER.

Yes; but think of a costume to suit the character.

RANK.

Let your wife appear in her every-day dress.

HELMER.

Very nicely said. But what character will you take?

RANK.

I am perfectly clear as to that, my dear friend?

HELMER.

Well?

RANK.

At the next masquerade I shall appear invisible.

HELMER.

What a comical idea!

RANK.

Don't you know there is a big, black hat—haven't you heard stories of the hat that made people invisible? You pull it all over you, and then nobody sees you.

HELMER (*with a suppressed smile*).

Oh, I dare say.

RANK.

But I am quite forgetting why I came in here. Helmer, just give me a cigar—one of the dark Havannas.

HELMER.

With the greatest pleasure (*hands him the case*).

RANK (*takes one and cuts the end off*).

Thanks.

NORA (*hands him a fusee*).

Here is a light.

RANK.

A thousand thanks. (*She holds the match. He lights his cigar at it.*) And now good-bye.

HELMER.

Good-bye, good-bye, my dear fellow.

NORA.

Sleep well, Doctor Rank.

RANK.

I thank you for that kind wish.

NORA.

Wish me the same.

RANK.

You? Very well, since you ask me to—sleep well. And thank you for the light. (*He nods to them both and goes.*)

SCENE V.

HELMER. NORA. *Later* ELLEN.HELMER (*in an undertone*).

He's been drinking a good deal to-night.

NORA (*absently*).

I dare say. (*HELMER takes his bunch of keys from his pocket and goes into the hall.*) Torvald, what are you doing out there?

HELMER.

I must empty the letter-box—it is quite full; or to-morrow there will be no room for the newspapers.

NORA.

Are you going to do some work now?

HELMER.

Not very likely! What's this? Somebody's been at the lock.

NORA.

The lock?

HELMER.

Positively. What does it mean? I can't suspect that the servants. . . Here's a broken hair-pin. Nora, it is one of yours.

NORA (*quickly*).

Then it must have been the children.

HELMER.

Then you really must break them of such tricks. Hm, hm. There! at last I've got it open. (*Takes the contents out and calls into the kitchen.*) Ellen, Ellen; just put the hall door lamp out. (*He returns to the room and shuts the*

door into the hall. With letters in his hand.) Just see ! only look how they have accumulated. (*Looks among them.*) What's that ?

NORA (*at the window*).

The letter ! oh, no, no, Torvald !

HELMER.

Two visiting cards—from Rank.

NORA.

From Doctor Rank ?

HELMER (*looking at them*).

Rank, M.D. They were on the top. He must have just put them in.

NORA.

Is there anything on them ?

HELMER.

Over the name there is a black cross. Look at it. That is a very ominous sign. Upon my word it is as though he were announcing his own death.

NORA.

So he is.

HELMER.

What ! do you know anything ? did he tell you anything ?

NORA.

Yes. He said that when the card came it would mean he had taken leave of us. He means to shut himself up and die.

HELMER.

Poor fellow ! I did know that we should not be able to keep him much longer. But so soon ! . . . And then he goes into his hiding-place like a wounded animal.

NORA.

If it has to happen it is best for it to happen without words ; is it not, Torvald ?

HELMER (*walking up and down*).

He was so thoroughly intimate with us. I can hardly fancy our life without him. He and his troubles and

loneliness formed a sort of cloudy background to our sunny happiness. Well, perhaps it is best so—for him, at any rate (*stands still*). And perhaps for us too. Now we two are thrown entirely upon each other. (*Puts his arm round her.*) My darling wife! it seems to me as if I could never hold you closely enough. Do you know, Nora, I often wish some danger might threaten you, against which I could stake body and soul, and all, all else, for your dear sake.

NORA (*frees herself and says firmly and decidedly*).

Now you shall read your letters, Torvald.

HELMER.

No, no, not to-night. I want to stay with you, sweet wife.

NORA.

With the thought of your friend's death?

HELMER.

You are right, dear. It has shaken us both. Something unlovely has come between us: thoughts of death and dissolution. We must try to get rid of them. Till then—you go to bed, and I will go to my room a little.

NORA (*her arms round his neck*).

Torvald, good night, good night.

HELMER (*kisses her on the forehead*).

Good night, my little singing bird. Sleep well, Nora. Now I will go and read all my letters through. (*He goes with the bundle of letters into his room and shuts the door behind him.*)

NORA (*with wild glances, wanders round touching things, seizes HELMER'S domino, throws it over her, and whispers quietly, hoarsely, and brokenly*).

Never see him again. Never, never, never. (*Throws her shawl over her head.*) And never see the children again. Not them, either. Never, never. Oh, that black, icy water! Oh, that bottomless. . . Oh, if it were but over! Now he has it; now he is reading it. Oh, no, no; not yet. Torvald, good-bye, you and the children. (*She*

is rushing out through the hall; in the same moment HELMER tears his door open and stands there with an open letter in his hand.)

HELMER.

Nora!

NORA (*crying aloud*).

Ah!

HELMER.

What is this? Do you know what is in this letter?

NORA.

Yes, I know. Let me go; let me go out.

HELMER (*holding her back*).

Where do you want to go to?

NORA (*tries to get free*).

You sha'n't save me, Torvald.

HELMER (*falling back*).

True! is it true what he writes? Horrible! No, no; it is perfectly impossible; it cannot be true.

NORA.

It is true. I have loved you beyond all else in the world.

HELMER.

Don't come to me with silly excuses.

NORA (*a step nearer to him*).

Torvald!

HELMER.

You miserable creature—what have you done?

NORA.

Let me go. You shall not suffer for it; you shall not take it upon yourself.

HELMER.

Don't try any actress's tricks (*shuts the door to the hall*). Here you will stay and abide my judgment. Do you comprehend what you have done? Answer. Do you understand it?

NORA (*looks at him fixedly, and says with heightened expression*).

Yes. Now I begin to understand it quite.

HELMER (*walking round*).

Oh, what an awful awakening! During all these eight years—you who were my pride and my joy—a hypocrite, a liar,—ay, and worse, worse—a criminal. Oh! what an abyss of unloveliness it implies! Ugh! ugh!

(NORA *is silent, and continues to look fixedly at him.*)

HELMER (*continues standing before her.*)

I ought to have guessed that something of the kind was sure to happen. I ought to have foreseen it. Your father's low principles,—be silent!—your father's low principles you have inherited, every one of them. No religion, no morality, no sense of duty. Oh, how bitterly punished I am for ever having winked at his doings. I did it for your sake; and this the way you reward me.

NORA.

Yes, just so.

HELMER.

You have utterly destroyed my happiness; you have annihilated my whole future. Oh, the thought of it is fearful! I find I am in the power of a human being who is devoid of conscience; he can do whatever he pleases with me, ask of me whatever he chooses, order me about and command me exactly as it suits him—I must put up with it in silence. . . And I must sink in this pitiable way and go to ruin for the sake of an unprincipled woman.

NORA.

When I am no more you will be free.

HELMER.

No fine phrases, if you please. That's the kind of thing your father was always ready with. What sort of good would it do me if you were 'no more,' as you say? No good in the world! In spite of that he can publish the whole story; and if he does publish it, perhaps I should be suspected of having been a party to your criminal transactions. Perhaps people will think I was the origin-

ator, that I prompted you to do it. And for all this I have you to thank—you whom during the whole of our married life I have so cherished. Do you understand now what it is you have done to me?

NORA (*with cold calm*).

Yes.

HELMER.

It is so incredible that I can still hardly believe it. But I must come to some decision. Take that shawl off. Take it off, I say! I must try to pacify him in one way or the other. The story must be kept a secret, cost what it may. And as far as you and I are concerned, it must appear that we go on as we always have gone on. But of course only in the eyes of the world. Of course you will continue to live in the house; that is understood. But the children I shall not allow you to educate; I dare not trust them to you. . . Oh, that I should have to say this to one whom I have so tenderly loved . . . whom I still . . . But that must be a thing of the past. Henceforward there can be no question of happiness, but merely of saving the ruins, the fragments, the appearance of it. (*A ring. HELMER recovers himself.*) What's that? So late! Can it be the most terrible thing of all? Can he?—hide yourself, Nora; say you are ill. (*NORA stands motionless. HELMER goes to the door and opens it.*)

ELLEN (*half-undressed in the hall*).

Here is a letter for mistress.

HELMER.

Give it to me (*seizes the letter and shuts the door*). Yes, from him. You will not have it. I shall read it.

NORA.

Read it.

HELMER (*by the lamp*).

I have hardly courage to. Perhaps we are lost, both you and I. Ah! I must know (*tears the letter hastily open; looks at an enclosure; a cry of joy*). Nora!

(NORA looks interrogatively at him.)

HELMER.

Nora! Indeed I must read it again. Yes, yes; it is so. I am saved! Nora, I am saved!

NORA.

And I?

HELMER.

You too, of course; we are both saved, you and I. Look here. He sends you back your acknowledgment of the debt; he writes that he regrets and laments—that a happy turn in his life— Oh, it can't matter to us what he writes. We are saved, Nora! Nobody has any hold over you. Oh, Nora, Nora! Ah, but first let us destroy all these horrible pieces of writing. . . . I'll just see, though (*glances at the I. O. U.*). No, I won't look at it; the whole thing shall be no more to me than a bad dream. (*Tears the I. O. U. and both the letters in two, throws them into the fire, and watches them burn.*) There, it has no further existence. He wrote that ever since Christmas Day you had been . . . Oh, Nora, they must have been three awful days for you!

NORA.

I have fought a hard fight in the last three days.

HELMER.

What tortures you must have suffered, without having any other means of escape than . . . but we won't think about those ugly things any more; we will only rejoice and repeat: It is all over, all over. Don't you hear? Somehow, Nora, you don't seem able to grasp it yet! Yes, it's over. Then what can be the meaning of this set look on your face? Oh, poor dear Nora, I quite understand: you can't believe just yet that I have forgiven you. But I really have forgiven you, Nora; I swear it to you; I have forgiven you everything. I know so well you did it all out of love to me.

NORA.

That is true.

HELMER.

You loved me just as a wife should love her husband. It was only the means you could not judge rightly about. But do you think you are less dear to me for not knowing how to act alone? No, indeed; only lean on me; I will advise and guide you. I should be no true man if it were not just this woman's helplessness that makes you doubly attractive in my eyes. You must not dwell on the harsh words I spoke in my first moment of terror, when I believed ruin was about to crush my very life out. I have forgiven you, Nora; I swear to you I have forgiven you.

NORA.

I thank you for your forgiveness (*goes through the left door*).

HELMER.

No, stay (*looks in*). What are you doing in the alcove?

NORA (*inside*).

Taking off my masquerade dress.

HELMER (*in the open door*).

Yes, do, dear; try to rest and restore your mind to its balance, my scared little song-bird. You may go to rest in comfort; I have broad wings to protect you (*walks round by the door*). Oh, how beautiful and cosy our home is, Nora. Here you are safe; here I can shelter you like a hunted dove, whom I have saved from the claws of the hawk. I shall soon quiet your poor beating heart. Believe me, Nora, gradually peace will return. To-morrow all this will look quite different to you; I shall not need to repeat over and over again that I forgive you: you will feel for yourself that it is true. How can you think I could ever bring my heart to drive you away, or even so much as reproach you? Oh, you don't know what a true man's heart is made of, Nora! A man feels there is something indescribably sweet and soothing in his having forgiven his wife, that he has honestly forgiven her from the bottom of his heart. She becomes his property in a double sense, as it were. She is as though born again; she has

become to a certain extent at once his wife and his child. And that is what you shall really be to me henceforth, you ill-advised and helpless darling. Don't be anxious about anything, Nora : only open your heart to me, and I will be both will and conscience to you. Why, what's this? Not gone to bed? You have changed your dress.

NORA (*entering in her everyday dress*).

Yes, Torvald ; now I have changed my dress.

HELMER.

But why, now it is so late?

NORA.

I shall not sleep to-night.

HELMER.

But, Nora dear . . .

NORA (*looking at her watch*).

It is not so very late. Sit down here, Torvald. We two have much to say to each other (*she sits on one side of the table*).

HELMER.

Nora, what does that mean? Your cold, set face!

NORA.

Sit down; it will take some time. I have to talk over many things with you.

HELMER (*sitting opposite to her at the table*).

Nora, you make me anxious . . . I don't in the least understand you.

NORA.

Just so. You don't understand me. And in the same way I have never understood you, till to-night. No, don't interrupt me. Only listen to what I say . . . This is a breaking off, Torvald.

HELMER.

How do you mean?

NORA (*after a short silence*).

Does not one thing strike you as we sit here?

HELMER.

What should strike me?

NORA.

We have now been married eight years. Does it not strike you that to-night for the first time we two, you and I, husband and wife, are speaking together seriously?

HELMER.

Well; 'seriously,' what does that mean?

NORA.

During eight whole years and more, since the day we first made each other's acquaintance, we have never exchanged one serious word about serious things.

HELMER.

Ought I, then, to have persistently initiated you into difficulties you could not help me by sharing?

NORA.

I am not talking of difficulties. All I am saying is, that we have never yet seriously talked any one thing over together.

HELMER.

But, dearest Nora, would it have been any good to you if we had?

NORA.

That is the very point. You have never understood me. . . . I have been greatly wronged, Torvald. First by father and then by you.

HELMER.

What! by us two, by us two—who have loved you more deeply than all others have?

NORA (*shakes her head*).

You two have never loved me. You only thought it was pleasant to be in love with me.

HELMER.

But, Nora, these are strange words.

NORA.

Yes ; it is just so, Torvald. While I was still at home with father, he used to tell me all his views, and so of course I held the same views ; if at any time I had a different view I concealed it, because he would not have liked people with opinions of their own. He used to call me his little doll, and play with me, as I in my turn used to play with my dolls. Then I came to live in your house.

HELMER.

What expressions you do use to describe our marriage !

NORA (*undisturbed*).

I mean—then I passed over from father's hands into yours. You settled everything according to your taste ; or I did only what you liked ; I don't exactly know. I think it was both ways, first one and then the other. When I look back on it now it seems to me as if I had been living here like a poor man, only from hand to mouth. I lived by performing tricks for you, Torvald. But you would have it so. You and father have sinned greatly against me. It is the fault of you two that nothing has been made of me.

HELMER.

How senseless and ungrateful you are. . . Haven't you been happy here ?

NORA.

No, never ; I thought I was, but I never was.

HELMER.

Not . . . not happy ?

NORA.

No ; only merry. And you were always so friendly and kind to me. But our house has been nothing but a nursery. Here I have been your doll-wife, just as at home I used to be papa's doll-child. And my children

were, in their turn, my dolls. I was exceedingly delighted when you played with me, just as the children were whenever I played with them. That has been our marriage, Torvald.

HELMER.

There is some truth in what you say, exaggerated and overdrawn though it may be. But henceforth it shall be different. The time for play is gone by; now comes the time for education.

NORA.

Whose education—mine or the children's?

HELMER.

Yours, as well as the children's, dear Nora.

NORA.

Oh, Torvald, you are not the man to educate me into being the right wife for you.

HELMER.

And *you* say that?

NORA.

And I—how have I been prepared to educate the children?

HELMER.

Nora!

NORA.

Did you not say just now yourself that *that* was a task you dared not entrust to me?

HELMER.

In a moment of excitement. How can you lay any stress upon that?

NORA.

No; you were perfectly right. For that task I am not ready. There is another which must be performed first. I must first try to educate myself. In that you are not the man to help me. I must set to work alone: you are

not the man to help me with it. I must do it alone. And that is why I am going away from you now.

HELMER (*jumping up*).

What—what are you saying?

NORA.

I must be thrown entirely upon myself if I am to come to any understanding as to what I am and what the things around me are : so I cannot stay with you any longer.

HELMER.

Nora, Nora !

NORA.

I shall now leave your house at once. Christina will, I am sure, take me in for to-night. . . .

HELMER.

You are insane. I shall not allow that ; I forbid it.

NORA.

From this time it is useless for you to forbid me things. Whatever belongs to me I shall take with me. I will have nothing from you either now or later on.

HELMER.

What utter madness this is !

NORA.

To-morrow I shall go home—I mean to my birthplace. There it will be easier for me to get something to do of one sort or another.

HELMER.

Oh, you blind, inexperienced creature !

NORA.

I must try to gain experience, Torvald.

HELMER.

To forsake your home, your husband, and your children ! And only think what people will say about it.

NORA.

I cannot take that into consideration. I only know that to go is necessary for me.

HELMER.

Oh, it drives one wild! Is this the way you can evade your holiest duties?

NORA.

What do you consider my holiest duties?

HELMER.

Do I need to tell you that? Are they not your duties to your husband and your children?

NORA.

I have other duties equally sacred.

HELMER.

No, you have not. What duties do you mean?

NORA.

Duties towards myself.

HELMER.

Before all else you are a wife and mother.

NORA.

I no longer think so. I think that before all else I am a human being just as you are, or at least I will try to become one. I know very well that most people agree with you, Torvald, and what is to be found in books. But I cannot be satisfied any longer with what most people say, and with what is in books. I must think over things for myself, and try to get clear about them.

HELMER.

Is it possible you are not clear about your position in your own family? Have you not in questions like these a guide who cannot err? Have you not religion?

NORA.

Oh, Torvald, I don't know what religion is.

HELMER.

What are you saying?

NORA.

I know nothing but what our clergyman told me when I was confirmed. He explained that religion was this and that. When I have got quite away from here, and am all by myself, then I will examine that matter too. I will see whether what our clergyman taught is true; or, at any rate, whether it is true for me.

HELMER.

Who ever heard such things from a young wife's lips? But if religion cannot lead you to the right, let me appeal to your conscience: for I suppose you have some moral feeling? Or, answer me, perhaps you have none?

NORA.

Well, Torvald, I think I had better not answer you. I really don't know. About those things I am not at all clear. I only know that I have quite a different opinion about them from yours. I have now learnt too that the laws are different from what I thought they were; but I can't convince myself that they are right. It appears that a woman has no right to spare her father trouble when he is old and dying, or to save her husband's life. I don't believe that.

HELMER.

You talk like a child. You don't understand the society in which you live.

NORA.

No, no more I do. But now I will set to work and learn it. I must make up my mind whether society is right or whether I am.

HELMER.

Nora, you are ill, you are feverish; I almost think you are out of your senses.

NORA.

I never felt so clear and certain about things as I feel to-night.

HELMER.

And feeling clear and certain, you forsake husband and children?

NORA.

Yes; I do.

HELMER.

Then there is only one possible explanation of it.

NORA.

What is that?

HELMER.

You no longer love me.

NORA.

No; that is just the thing.

HELMER.

Nora! . . . Can you bring yourself to say so?

NORA.

Oh, I'm so sorry, Torvald; for you have always been so kind to me. But I can't help it. I do not love you any longer.

HELMER (*keeping his composure with difficulty*).

Is this another of the things you are clear and certain about?

NORA.

Yes, quite. That is why I will not stay here any longer.

HELMER.

And can you also explain to me how I have lost your love?

NORA.

Yes ; I can. It was this evening when the miracle did not happen ; for it was then I saw you were not the man I had taken you for.

HELMER.

Explain yourself more ; I don't understand.

NORA.

I have waited so patiently all these eight years ; for, indeed, I saw well enough that miracles do not happen every day. Then this trouble broke over my head, and then I was so firmly convinced that now the miracle must be at hand. When Krogstad's letter lay in the box outside, the thought never once occurred to me that you could allow yourself to submit to the conditions of such a man. I was so firmly convinced that you would say to him, "Pray make the affair known to all the world ;" and when that had been done. . .

HELMER.

Well ? And when I had given my own wife's name up to disgrace and shame ?

NORA.

When that had been done, then you would, as I firmly believed, stand before the world, take everything upon yourself, and say, 'I am the guilty person.'

HELMER.

Nora !

NORA.

You mean I should never have accepted such a sacrifice from you ? No ; certainly not. But what would my assertions have been worth compared with yours ? That was the miracle that I hoped and feared. And it was to hinder that that I wanted to put an end to my life.

HELMER.

I would gladly work for you, day and night, Nora, bear sorrow and trouble for your sake ; but no man sacrifices his honour to a person he loves.

NORA.

That is what millions of women have done.

HELMER.

Oh, you think and talk like a silly child.

NORA.

Very likely. But you neither think nor speak like the man I could be one with. When your terror was over,—not for what threatened *me*, but for what involved *you*,—and when there was nothing more to fear, then it was in your eyes as though nothing whatever had happened. I was just as much as ever your lark, your doll, whom you would take twice as much care of in future because she was so weak and frail (*stands up*). Torvald, in that moment it became clear to me that I had been living here all these years with a strange man and had borne him three children. Oh, I cannot bear to think of it. I could tear myself to pieces!

HELMER (*sadly*).

I see it, I see it: a chasm has opened between us. . . .
But, Nora, can it never be filled up?

NORA.

As I now am I am no wife for you.

HELMER.

I am strong enough to become another man.

NORA.

Perhaps, when your doll is taken away from you.

HELMER.

Part—part from you! No, Nora, no; I cannot grasp it.

NORA (*going into the right room*).

The more reason for it to happen. (*She comes in with her walking things and a small travelling bag, which she puts on the chair by the table.*)

HELMER.

Nora, Nora, not now. Wait till to-morrow.

NORA (*putting on her cloak*).

I cannot spend the night in the house of a man who is a stranger to me.

HELMER.

But can't we live here as brother and sister?

NORA (*tying her bonnet tightly*).

You know quite well that would not last long (*puts her shawl on*). Good-bye, Torvald. I will not see the children before I go. I know they are in better hands than mine. As I now am I can be nothing to them.

HELMER.

But later, Nora—later on?

NORA.

How can I tell? I have no idea what will become of me.

HELMER.

But you are my wife—both as you are now and as you will become.

NORA.

Listen, Torvald. When a wife leaves her husband's house, as I am doing, then I have heard he is free from all duties towards her in the eyes of the law. At any rate, I release you from all duties. You must feel yourself no more bound by anything than I feel. There must be perfect freedom on both sides. There, there is your ring back. Give me mine.

HELMER.

That too?

NORA.

That too.

HELMER.

Here it is.

NORA.

Very well. Yes ; now it is all past and gone. Here, I lay the keys down. The maids know how to manage everything in the house far better than I do. To-morrow, when I have started on my journey, Christina will come in order to pack up the few things that are my own. They will be sent after me.

HELMER.

Past and gone ! Nora, will you never think of me again ?

NORA.

Certainly. I shall think very often of you and the children and this house.

HELMER.

May I write to you, Nora ?

NORA.

No, never. You must not.

HELMER.

But I may send you what . . .

NORA.

Nothing, nothing.

HELMER.

Help you when you are in need ?

NORA.

No, I say. I take nothing from strangers.

HELMER.

Nora, can I never become to you anything but a stranger ?

NORA (*taking her travelling bag sadly*).

The greatest miracle of all would have to happen then, Torvald.

HELMER.

Tell me what the greatest miracle is.

NORA.

We both should need to change so, you as well as I, that—Oh, Torvald, I no longer believe in anything miraculous.

HELMER.

But I believe in it. Tell me. We must so change that . . .

NORA.

That our living together could be a marriage. Good-bye. (*She goes out through the hall.*)

HELMER (*sinks in a chair by the door with his hands before his face*).

Nora, Nora! (*He looks round and stands up.*) Empty. She isn't here now. (*A hope inspires him.*) The greatest miracle! (*Below-stairs a door is heard shutting ominously in the lock.*)

THE END.

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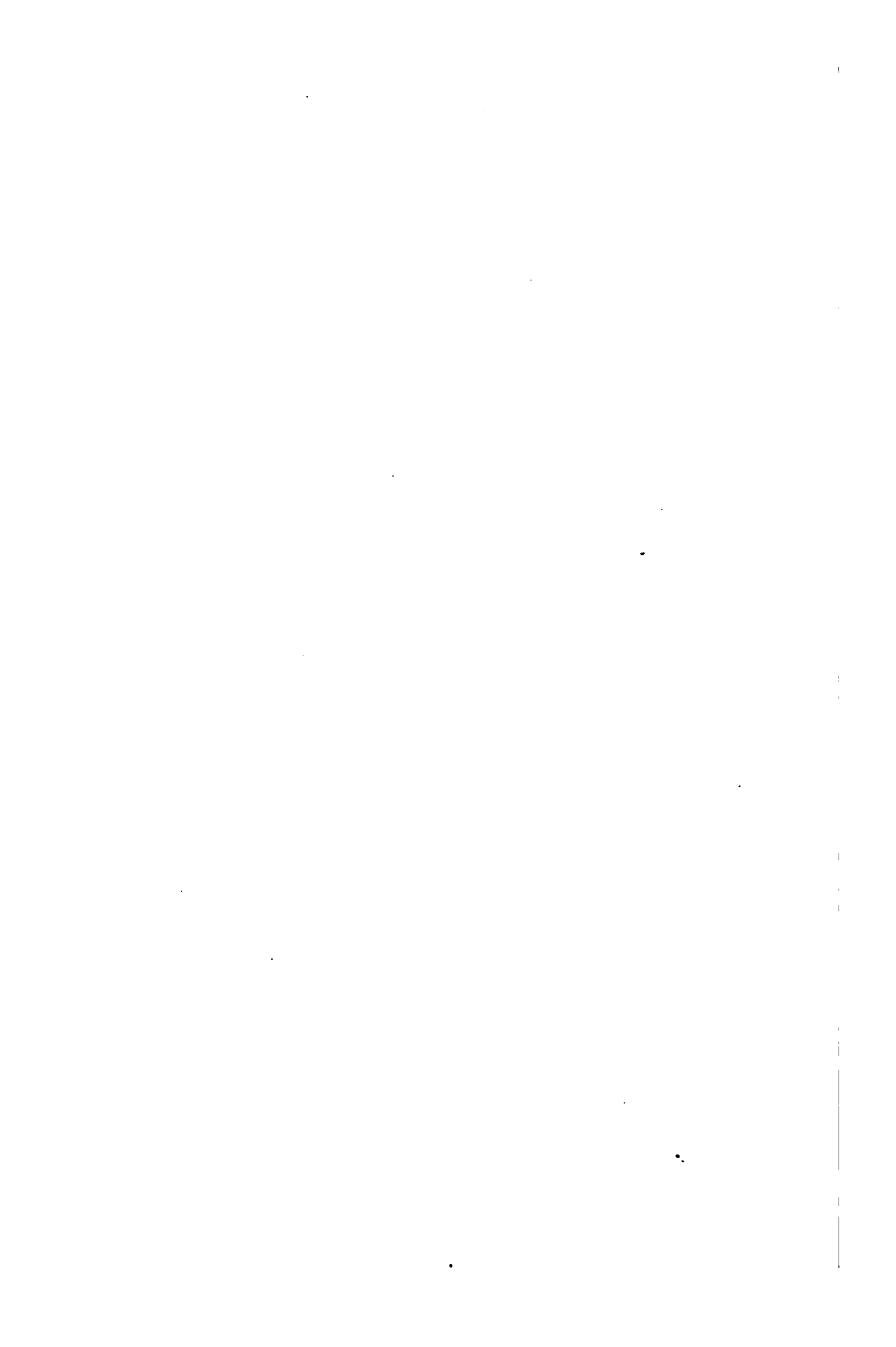
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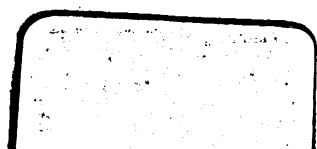
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